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By *Dr. S. G. Doane,*

Feb. 29, 1888.

Q.?

FAMILY CREEDS.

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A Romance.

BY

WM. McDONNELL,

AUTHOR OF "EXETER HALL," "THE HEATHENS OF THE HEATH," ETC., ETC

TORONTO :
BELFORDS, CLARKE & CO.

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FAMILY CREEDS.

CHAPTER I.

MY EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS.

I WANT to write a story, one not altogether a fiction. I may try to embellish a little here and there, or rather I may endeavor to euphemize, and deal more leniently with some of my characters than their actions at first sight may seem to warrant. I have always found it more profitable to remember that to err is human, and I know by long experience that it is blessed to forgive ; for, in a world like this, where there is so much temptation, so much error, so much frailty, and so much suffering—and perhaps, also, so much repentance—that that impulse should be deemed sacred indeed which will lead to a just, a tender, and a merciful consideration for the failings of others.

The story of my life, so far, has sufficient incidents, if properly put together, to make it somewhat interesting. But here comes my drawback, I could never write well, that is to say, I could not sit down and write a page or so in an hour, and so on, and on, hour after hour, sketching and painting and

gilding, like some of those gifted ones we read of, and whom I sometimes envy. I could not flash out ideas in crimson and gold, or in rainbow hues. Mine are not glittering pearls of thought, they are, alas! of a kind naturally rather too sombre, but even such as they are, I find them difficult enough to present, and if I have to tell a tale of suffering, I cannot portray my ideas in the true but sad, sad coloring which should be in keeping with the relation of that which has been, or is to be, any way dreary or hopeless.

I must of necessity write slowly. I could not give you a rapid description of a storm at sea, of dismasted ships tossed about at night like horrid spectres upon the black billows. I could not draw upon your imagination to make you listen to the wild, wild rush of waves or of howling winds, or make your heart bound with terror at the approaching uproar of a frantic gale, or bid you look with dread at the angry clouds rushing wildly through the gloomy sky. Nor could I describe with poetic fervor, beautiful scenery; sunlight, and blushing flowers, and dewy meadows; moonlight, with misty mountains afar; placid lakes, with dim islands in the distance. I could not pencil to my satisfaction towering cliffs, rugged rocks, gloomy caves, sylvan shades, or sparkling waterfalls. No, I have not sufficient ability to deal in gorgeous metaphors, or in magnificent artistic extravagances. Oh, how often I have wished for that fertility of thought and that facility of expression which so many possess. Oh, what I would sometimes give to be able to catch and retain my fleeting visions, or to pencil my day-dreams. What a strange but wild phantasmagoria of human life I think I could often display. I must, however, only toil on in my own slow way, and I would prefer to be deliberate in the hope that what I try to take so much care to write—say, in the cause of Humanity—may be worthy of a perusal.

In the service of truth one must be circumspect, and, above all things, thoroughly impartial; one should follow the direct line, even if the most cherished opinions have to be abandoned. I am in earnest, and I shall have no dalliance with smiling probabilities or glittering illusions. I wish to make a truthful impression and I must therefore take time to mature my thoughts, for I do not wish to have my words merely glanced at and then forgotten forever. I want to be faithful in my representations, true to nature and to the sternest facts, yet, strange as it may appear, many find it more difficult to do this than to curb imagination and refuse to accept from its plastic hand the aerial creations which it can so readily supply. Exaggeration may answer for poetical rhapsodies; it will not be entirely suitable for my humble prose.

It is a curious effort to try and remember our first impressions of life; of those which first came to make us think that existence was a reality. How dreamlike is the recollection of our earliest associations; what misty confused ideas of persons and things it seems to present. Yet a few of these stand out clear and well-defined in the memory as if all in relation to them had occurred only yesterday. I remember when, as a little sleepy-head, I used to sit on my mother's knee, and recline on her bosom at evening time. These were the sweetest moments of my child life. The river Lee was beneath our window, I can still see the red light of the departing day deepening on its placid surface, and I can hear the mellowed sounds of the Shandon bells—the famous bells of the beautiful City of Cork—mingling with my mother's soft voice as she tried to lull me, her little wearied boy, to sleep, by singing—

“’Twas on the morn of Valentine,
When birds began to mate,”

and I can still see in imagination. “John, and Dick, and Joe,

and Jack, and Humphrey with his flail," standing with smiling faces before me ; and "Kitty," who was the "charming girl" of the song, making off with her "milk and pail," lest she should be caressed or delayed by "Dame Durden's" hilarious "serving men." Ah, me ! how I used to try and keep awake to listen to the words, and to look at these. But that voice, that mother's soft voice which hushed me so often to a heavenly slumber, that angelic voice, has long been hushed itself—shall I hear it no more but in my dreams ? And the minor strain of that song—the first I ever learned—is the cadence that has ever softened the wildest trumpet blast that has urged me to rush forward in the fierce battle of life.

And then I remember the little stories I was told. How sorry I used to feel for the death of "Poor Cock Robin," and how angry I felt at the "sparrow, with his bow and arrow," that took his life away ; and for years afterwards I used to throw crumbs to the little robins, and clap my hands to frighten away every sparrow. Even still, after a long, long experience, I sometimes look with a kind of suspicion and dislike upon these poor plebeian chirpers.

I well know how I pitied poor "Little Red Riding Hood," and how sorry I felt to see her led away by the treacherous wiles of her enemy. And then the efforts of the gentle robins to hide with leaves the lost "Children in the Woods," had my most tender sympathies. Added to these, I felt amazed at the wonderful exploits of "Jack the Giant Killer,"—wonderful, because I thought they were true. Alas, in the course of my life so far, I have met with men whose wanton cruelty reminded me of that of the sparrow ; I have met many a little Red Riding Hood that has been pounced upon by some ravening wolf ; I have met pitiful hearts that have been as humane as the robins to poor lost children ; and I have had inter-

course with many of the self-confident and boastful, who fancied themselves specially sent into the world to astonish the multitude by the performance of only superhuman acts, and who would scorn to direct their weapons against any of less stature than the so-called giants of the age.

Besides these, there are some real scenes that I witnessed and that are still vividly before me. I remember having once been taken into a large building—it was a church. What a long time ago it now seems! It was a bright day, but the interior of the building was draped in black; it was very black, every ray of heaven's light seemed to have been excluded. Oh, how gloomy it was! A large black coffin was on a rich stand at the upper end of the central aisle, near the railing at the foot of the altar steps. Around this there must have been more than a hundred lighted tapers, and a hundred lighted wax candles in massive silver candelabra. At the head of the coffin there was a faldstool, there was another at the foot, and kneeling on these, priests in albs, who wore black stoles with crosses wrought in silver at their ends, were reading prayers in a kind of monotonous undertone. Pressing around the coffin and the kneeling priests, there was a great number of persons, mostly women. All of these were, I think, weeping, for I could see the tears, the real tears of many, as they coursed down the cheek; and some, whose hands were clasped, and whose bodies swayed slowly from side to side as if under the influence of anguish, seemed to be in great distress. Many of the women knelt on the bare hard floor thumbing their beads and repeating their *aves*. Nearly all who stood appeared to be gazing mournfully on the beloved remains that were laid in the coffin. I pitied the people, for I thought they must have lost their dearest friend, and that hope and comfort had left them for ever.

I was held above the heads of the despondent crowd in order that I might be better able to see what was going on. The face in the coffin was ghastly ; the features were rather distorted, wearing an expression of pain. The corpse was enshrouded in what appeared to be the rich vestments of a priest or bishop ; and the pale, dead hands seemed to clutch a large gold or silver crucifix. I was almost terror-stricken at the sight—it was the first dead body I had ever seen—and I would have run away if I could, but I had to remain.

Presently, while the deepest silence prevailed, when not a sound could be heard save the occasional sobs which one might have fancied were but the falling or the tapping of great tears upon a coffin lid, there was an almost sudden illumination. The great altar became all ablaze with lights, and it seemed as if the gates of heaven had been slowly opened, and that we could hear the sweet voices of angel and archangel, and cherubim, and rapt seraphim, in the distance. Oh, how my heart beat when I heard the soft celestial strains, as if the saints in glory were murmuring a welcome, and were about to descend among us to bear away another of the redeemed to the realms of eternal bliss. Oh, what exquisite sounds ! what supernatural harmony it was to me at the moment ! The plaintive music must have smitten the rock—must have touched every heart in the crowded church—for in a short time tears, gushing tears, welled up into many an eye that was perhaps seldom filled with these sacred visitants ; and when I saw nearly all around me bent and weeping, and while I wondered why the people wept, I was overcome by a singular emotion,—I bent my head and was weeping too.

The music now seemed to be closer ; then it ceased for a short time. There was a hush, yet the whisper of prayer was faintly audible, and faint sobs and sighs could be heard even in

the prevailing silence. Then came the swelling harmony again ; a greater number of voices sung louder, and a burst of hallelujahs filled the entire edifice. I looked up ; the numerous lights seemed to be more brilliant ; and a bishop in gorgeous vestments, followed by a number of robed priests and boys in albs, was approaching the grand altar from the vestry. I was still held up, and for an hour or so longer I saw the imposing ceremonial—quite unmeaning to me at the time. I was afterwards told that an “office and high mass” had been said or sung for the repose of the soul of the departed. Many other things were done by the bishop and the attendant clergy, none of which I could of course understand ; but the music, repeated at intervals, engaged almost my entire attention. There was little else that was attractive ; there were glaring lights, and spangled vestments, but these offered only a feeble contrast to the prevailing gloom of nearly the whole place—a melancholy, repulsive gloom—I shudder when I think of it even now. It was the first time, to my knowledge, that I had been in a church, it was the first religious ceremony I had ever witnessed. I had heard Latin prayers and Latin responses ; and I had seen clouds of incense that made the lights appear dim. I had seen a ghastly spectacle—a dead body—weeping people, emblems of sorrow, and evidences of grief and hopelessness that were most depressing. Nothing but the music can I now remember with the least degree of pleasure—even that came pleading and pitiful, bringing tears. And when I was taken out into the broad daylight again, I felt like one who had just escaped from some black prison, and—though it may be very wrong—since that time large churches and great religious ceremonies are sometimes associated in my mind with everything that is gloomy, death-like, and desponding.



CHAPTER II.

THE WHITE BOY.

ON another occasion I had been taken out for a walk. The weather was mild and pleasant, and we rambled to some nice places in the suburbs of the city in which I was born, and in which we lived. It must have been spring time, for the fields were green, and I had been picking up ever so many daisies and butter-cups. We heard the notes of the thrush among the orchard blossoms, and away up, up in the sky, the song of the lark seemed to be greeting the sunbeams. I could see for a moment or two, a little shining speck, a little warbling mote, ascending higher and higher until it was lost in the deep blue above us. We crossed some clear running streams, and I stood for some time, on the margin of one of these, watching little fish, and throwing pebbles into the water. On our way home we saw some little boys and girls at work in a field. I thought it was but play, and I wished to be among them. I knew not that most of these had been forced to labor almost from infancy—I knew nothing of this. How happy they seemed to be! The world looked bright and beautiful as if it were heaven itself. In fact, at the time, my fancied heaven could not have been more attractive. I felt exhilarated, and could not imagine that any others had less reason to be content with life than I had.

As we turned a corner on the highway we saw an old woman sitting by the roadside. She was very old, very old and weak. She was eating something out of a little basket near her—something that she had probably begged and got for charity. I remember well how she looked—very old. Her face was mild but care-worn, and I somehow thought she must have been very handsome when she was young. But oh, how long ago!

We stood before her, and, without minding us, she continued to pick and to eat the cold table refuse out of her little basket—eating her solitary meal—no familiar friend or protector with her; no little child to share her repast. How I pitied that poor woman, and, without fully understanding the reason why, my heart went out towards her and I offered her the half-penny that I had in my pocket. It was all I had; I would have given her all I had at the time were it even a million. Poor thing, she looked surprised at the voluntary offering; so much from a child seemed to have been greatly valued by her. She had made no entreaty, but there was her pale, placid face, her resigned expression, her pitiful poverty, pleading for her all the time, and such pleading was to me the most eloquent appeal that could be made. She looked again at my little offering, and then, how like a mother she gazed at me! She stood up to bless me, and while she kept her trembling hand upon my head, she sought my face again, her eyes filled, and the big tears followed the furrows in her sunken cheeks. Oh, what sad visions memory must have then brought her!

My attendant was greatly affected, as I was myself, and, as we could not help her to the extent of our pity, we turned to go away. Just then, however, a heavy covered wagon drove up. A man jumped out of it and hurried towards us. He laid his hand roughly on the poor woman and told her she must go

with him. Ah me, how she trembled, and pleaded and looked, I thought, to us for assistance. But what could we do? It was the poor-house wagon on its rounds to pick up vagrants; it was as heartless as the laws that set its wheels in motion. Poverty had been made a crime and the woman just arrested was a street beggar, a poor, patient, inoffensive wanderer from door to door. She had perhaps but just left the crowded thoroughfare to come out here and sit in the sunlight, near a blossoming hedge, to eat her crust in peace; and it might be to look once more on some familiar scene of happier days. But here she was an unlicensed pauper, here she was an unclean thing polluting the highway, here she was a poor feeble beggar-woman found upon a public road, a public reproach to Christian pastors and to Christian men, and offensive to the eyes of a respectable Christian community; and contrary also to some humane law or statute by Christian legislators in her case made and provided.

I well remember how keenly I felt the outrage. I was incensed at the monstrous injustice which I was unable to resist. And had I been a strong and full-grown man at the time, had I had ample power at the moment, my impulse would have been to annihilate the coarse rude agents of an oppressive inhuman system that had shocked the best feelings of my nature, and that was a disgrace to the so-called civilization of a Christian land. But of what avail was the indignation of a child; the wagon was driven off with its sad burden, and I shall never forget the hopeless, yet imploring look the poor woman gave us when she found herself hurried away to the poor-house prison.

But a sadder circumstance than this is now before my mind. A year or so afterwards, soon after breakfast, one morning, I was told to get ready for a walk. Some great event was to

take place that day ; I was not informed what it was to be, but I was desired to dress with particular care, and as we were to be away for some time, a little satchel which we often took out with us was filled with bread and cakes, as it was probably thought that these might be in brisk demand before our return. It seemed to be like some kind of a holiday with many, and I heard some one speak about a person called "the poor White Boy," in terms of commiseration.

"The poor White Boy !" Who was he, and why did people seem to be sad when they mentioned his name—if this was the one by which he was known ? I had heard of some urchin that had been brutally beaten for having kept away from school, and I had a kind of idea that an obstinate boy of this class was perhaps about to be terribly punished before his fellows. However, I was led away from home evidently to see a sight of some important kind.

Early as it was in the forenoon a greater number of persons than usual could be seen in the streets. Little groups of men and women stood here and there as if in the consultation of some serious subject ; and as we passed a dark-looking old prison, which then stood near the end of North Gate Bridge, there was a great crowd standing or lounging about, and several armed soldiers were on the alert to keep the pressing numbers of men, women, and children at a proper distance from the grim structure they were guarding. The prison was erected across the north end of North Main street ; it stood over three great archways, and there were massive loopholed gates at each end of these which could be closed to cut off communication in case of a popular disturbance. The large central archway was for horsemen and vehicles, and the smaller one at either side was for pedestrians. The black, barred, deep-set windows along one side of the prison looked down upon the River Lee,

and from those on the other extent, the everyday hurry and bustle of the busy street could be seen.

On this day in particular, there seemed to be more faces than usual at the tiers of windows fronting the river—the faces of a few felons and of numerous poor debtors (the stringent law for the incarceration of debtors was then in full force), all of whom appeared to be looking wistfully at the tinted cloud shadows that were mirrored beneath them in the flowing water. In one distant corner of the building there was a very heavily barred window, one of the highest from the ground, and behind the strong bars there was a pale face, the very pale face a young man—scarcely indeed at manhood yet—who gazed sadly on the people below. He was one who had evidently been led away by boyish enthusiasm, for he must have been incapable of seeing the folly or the crime of becoming a member of an illegal organization, and the eyes of nearly all assembled outside appeared to be turned upwards with sympathising look to that poor prisoner ; and the moment I saw his pallid face, it somehow struck me at once that he, with the sad and hopeless expression, that chilled me at the time, was the “White Boy.”

Well, I was soon led away, we had some difficulty, I remember, in getting through one of the side archways, as there were a great many people passing and repassing. North Main street, as far south as the Court House, was crowded, and our progress was slow ; but afterwards we got along the other streets well enough. Several persons appeared to be going our way, and after a time we got to where the houses were more scattered ; they were fewer and smaller, and we could see fields at a short distance. There a number of people stood or loitered around, evidently going no farther. I was helped up and seated upon a low wall a few yards from an elevated open space, and my con-

ductor sat next to me. Other persons came and clambered up, and the wall was soon covered with waiting people ; and when I enquired where we were, the open space in front of us was pointed out to me as "Gallows Green."

An hour or so longer passed away ; many seemed to grow impatient ; I grew hungry and had something to eat, and as the day was fine, I enjoyed my elevation and rest upon the wall after my long walk. A number of boys began, as usual, to play ; some commenced to wrestle ; and others went in search of sparrow's nests. Men lit their pipes and conversed, they had probably discussed and differed on various subjects, but all seemed to agree in their expressions of sympathy for—the "White Boy."

The White Boy again ! Why who could he be ? I knew nothing at the time of "Peep-o'-day Boys," or "White Boys," or "Defenders," or "Ribbon-men," or of any other such association which entrapped many a foolish youth to his ruin, and which led to agrarian and other retaliatory outrages disgraceful to the country. The one in my imagination was he with the pale face whom we had seen and left behind at the North Gate Gaol, a long way distant ; surely this could not be the person. Then who was it, what had he done, and what was to happen him ? I had an impression from what I had heard and could understand, that he was some innocent person who had suffered, or was about to suffer, some great wrong ; and this impression became stronger when I heard some call him a martyr, others a saint, and others, a true Irish hero. Near us there were some women who knelt on the grass, and while looking towards the open space, were counting their beads, and praying fervently. Were they praying for him ? And I heard one or two men wish that the poor innocent fellow, now in the hands of tyrannical persecutors, might have a painless happy death,

and a place in heaven near the mother of God. What did all this mean ?

While I was thus perplexed, there must have been an exciting rumour, for I heard many say that there was a reprieve; that a reprieve had just come from the Lord Lieutenant ; and several men sprang down from the wall and clapped their hands for joy ; others shouted and waved their hats in the air ; and others cried, " Success to ould Ireland, and down with the Sassenach." Of course I knew nothing as to the meaning of these expressions, but even then, while many seemed to rejoice, I could clearly trace disappointment in the faces of others ; as if if they had come to witness a sight and had lost their time and trouble.

Eager to know something of the matter I asked the person who was with me—

" What are the White Boys ?"

" Foolish boys, *allanah* ; gommochs—mad men the half of 'em."

" And what do they do ?"

" Do? little good, *oyea*, none ; but they keep the gallows goin' in iviry town in Ireland."

" What is the gallows ?"

" Somethin' that's seen here too often, God help us ! an' they'll have it here agin directly."

" Who is that poor woman crying there so much, among the others ?"

" Who *avick* ? Oh that's the woman who bore him, his broken-hearted mother ; and there's his father at her side, whose head will soon be gray."

For half an hour longer there seemed to be a state of uncertainty. Some few here and there left the place and went away ; but most of those present remained. Still it was

plain to perceive that many knew not what to make of the rumor, but soon, however, they seemed to understand all.

Just then a cart was seen approaching. It was loaded with what appeared to be long, heavy, dark-colored poles, and some boards. Four or five soldiers followed the cart, which was drawn up into the centre of the open space. There a few men unloaded the vehicle, and bolted or fastened the poles some way together at one end. They then raised them up and spread out the lower ends on the ground, and, behold, there was a triangle erected ; it was much larger than those used in market places for the suspension of weigh scales. The men then fixed a kind of platform in the triangle somewhat over half way its height from the ground ; a step ladder was placed against the platform, one of the men ascended on it, and with a hammer and one or two bolts made some other arrangements ; and then, when he stepped down again, I could perceive a big iron hook hanging ominously from the top of the triangle ; and some of the women who saw it commenced again to pray.

By this time I saw that many of those who had appeared inclined to go away remained, that several of those who had gone had returned, and that the crowd around the whole place had greatly increased. And then again there came another rumor ; a reprieve had not come—it had been refused—and there was to be an execution.

Fortunately I knew not the significance of this terrible word. I still sat quietly looking on, and I noticed that the people had become more subdued and orderly. We had not much longer to wait. The eyes of nearly all seemed to be turned in one direction. I looked and could see soldiers, horse and foot, coming slowly towards us. Midway between the lines of these guards two men were also to be seen. One was dressed in

black and was reading a small book ; the other wore a long, light blue frock coat—ah, how well I remember !—his neck was bare, his arms were pinioned back with a rope, and his face—that same young face again !—was deadly pale. One of these men was a Catholic priest, the other was—the “White Boy.”

In a few minutes longer the procession arrived at the open space. The soldiers surrounded this, the cavalry being on the outside ; the two men and a few officials were the only ones permitted to go within the guarded circle. They stood near the foot of the ladder which leant against the triangle, or gallows, as we now shall call it. The priest continued to read from his book, and the “White Boy” knelt as if to receive the last blessing. In a short time the priest took his leave, and one or two others shook hands with the poor prisoner ; and, then last of all, down came Canty, the hangman, who had assisted him to mount the platform.

And now, while standing there before all, the clouds seem to gather portentously over the place, the sky becomes gloomy as if the sun has averted his face from the sad scene. There is a hush, for most of the people have evidently become depressed. Women begin to sob and to pray again ; and more than one man sighs heavily, and prays that God will have mercy on the soul of the poor “White Boy.”

Now he is alone on the platform, a white cap or cover is over his head and face, the rope from his neck has been fastened to the great iron hook over his head, the executioner has descended, and, O God ! there stands a man on the very brink of eternity ! But even at this awful moment he has courage to say something to those around him. I could not hear all he said, but, before he ceased forever, he raised his voice and his last words were,—“Good people, I am sorry I have to die, but I suppose my sentence is just ; I didn’t know that I was doing

anything wrong when I joined the boys ; I was led astray by others, which I hope will be a warning to all. I forgive my accusers, and I ask ye all to pray for me now."

I could look at him no longer ; I trembled, and a feeling of faintness came over me, for I felt that something dreadful was going to happen. But then came a dull sound, and then came a prolonged murmur from the multitude. I looked up again, the "White Boy" had fallen from where he stood ; he hung suspended by the neck. I could see his knees partly drawn up, and I fancied I saw his limbs quivering in his death struggles. And while people around wept, the thunder growled its rebuke, and the clouds poured down their tears ; and when the people sighed, the wind came sobbing and sighing too ; and then it came in frantic gusts, rushing against the gallows structure as if to sweep its foul dark outlines from the face of the earth. But it still remained ; it had stood there before, and would be erected again.

And now the hanging body turns its covered face to the guards, and then to the people ; and, while I shudder, it then turns towards me. And then a sudden blast comes, and the lifeless form sways from side to side ; it turns again, and again the drooping body of the "White Boy" is seen swaying in the wind, swaying in the wind.

O, compassionate law-makers, what a sight was this to prepare for the eyes of women and children ! For years there had been such exhibitions here semi-annually—free and without charge—until Gallows Green had become a periodical place of resort ; until hardened criminals had become almost as reckless or indifferent about taking human life as the jury that had brought in their verdict, or the judge that had pronounced his sentence.

Only six months before the last dread evidence of the power of Parliament, a wretched culprit had to forfeit his life for

stealing half a dozen sheep. Here, again, was a young life forfeited for scarcely more than a mere political offence; no charge more serious than simple enrollment having been substantiated. Only fifty or sixty years ago a man's life was held comparatively of but little value to what it is at the present time. Law-makers in the House of Commons, and episcopal members of the House of Lords, claimed to have had scriptural authority for their Draconian enactments which caused a man's life to be taken for what might now be scarcely called a felony. And although capital crimes, which at that day might be counted by the score, are now reduced to less than half a dozen, yet it was with reluctance that law-makers yielded to the demands of the compassionate and merciful; and even, at the present day, when the most advanced and humane pronounce the death penalty a legal atrocity, the venerable bishops ensconced in the same House of Lords, and those whom they can influence, will hurl texts against every presumptuous innovator who denies the moral or the legal right of any government to claim such a dread forfeiture.

But there the body still swings—for after long years I can see it still. O humane legislators, see what your merciful enactments have accomplished! Gentlemen of the jury, you twelve good men and true, see the result of your verdict! My Lord Judge, Baron P——, with your horsehair wig—which ought to have stood aghast upon your head when it heard you pray for the prisoner's soul—look at the victim that you have condemned! But none of these came to witness the closing scene; they saw not the weeping clouds, nor the tears of the people; they heard not the rebuke of the storm, nor the muttered threatenings of the multitude; nor did they see the lifeless body of the hapless "White Boy" swaying in the wind, swaying in the wind.



CHAPTER III.

THE "BIG ROOM," AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

BEFORE I was led home that evening I was almost drenched to the skin. It had rained heavily for nearly two hours, and, as we had not come prepared for bad weather, I was most of the time exposed. That night I became nervous and restless, my sleep was greatly disturbed, and my dreams were frightful. At times I would start up under the terrible impression that I was the White Boy, that the rope was about my neck, that I was standing on the dreadful platform, and that it had fallen from under me. And then I would feel a choking sensation and the blood would rush into my head until it was ready to burst. Then I would hear the people's mournful prayers; then the dead man's distorted face would turn towards me, and I would try to shriek in terror. Then I would hear the moanings of the storm and again see the hanging body swaying in the wind; and then I would hear the roll of thunder, and the vivid lightnings would seem to heat the air, until it became like the scorching breath of a furnace, which set my brain on fire.

Far more than three weeks longer I lay almost senseless, my life had been despaired of, and it was fully a month before I could venture out of bed for an hour. Still, as the days passed, I seemed to grow no stronger. There was but little improvement, and as my condition gave rise to the most serious

misgivings, it was decided that a change of air and scene was of the first importance, and I was taken in a steamboat to Cove.

My father had a lease of a pleasant place in this delightful resort, and our family, like many others from the city, spent most of the summer months here close to the ocean. As it was, an occasional change from city-life was so agreeable that one or more of our connections could be found in this residence even during the winter months ; so that it might, in a manner, be said to be occupied nearly all the time.

Our house was situated on the side of a hill overlooking Cove harbor—now called Queenstown. It would be difficult indeed for a lover of the picturesque to select a more attractive location. Before us lay the shining haven, holding many vessels of different kinds—war ships, and ocean steamers ; great India-men, and coasters ; yachts, gigs, and fishing smacks ; besides several other crafts of different sizes, shapes, and tonnage. This grand harbor was almost surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills which were dotted with mansions, villas, and cottages—with here and there a projecting spire or turret—embowered in trees or in the midst of gardens that were bounded by fields of the richest verdure, and which, in many places, extended down to the water's edge. To the south, nearly in the middle of the watery space, we could see Spike Island, almost in front of the inlet leading to the sea, and on each side of this passage were the forts for the protection of the harbor—a harbor which is said to be sufficiently spacious to contain the whole British Navy, and one which has justified the authorities of Cork in the adoption of the motto for the arms of "The Beautiful City," of "*Statio Bene Fide Carinis*," and then beyond these defensive spots we could see the great Atlantic.

Our place of residence at Cove had once formed part of an

old priory, part of which had been pulled down ; and the remainder, having been fitted up in fair style and in a comfortable manner, made an excellent dwelling. One side and one end of the house was nearly covered with ivy, which in some spots crept upon the roof, and even up to the very top of one of the tall chimneys, as if desirous of testing the possibility of clinging to the column of smoke that could be almost constantly seen ascending from this outlet.

The house was but a short distance from the church with which it originally had been ecclesiastically connected, and after its alteration it might have been intended for the residence of the parish priest, and the curate ; but, though occupied by these clergymen for a few years, a change was made, and, when the place was vacated, my father, though a staunch Protestant, had somehow got possession of the house ; and as it was most desirable for a person of limited income, he continued to be rather indirectly a kind of pecuniary helper of a church and creed to which he was by no means partial.

It was perhaps owing to my mother's influence that he was put in possession of the premises. She was an ardent Catholic, and had a strange fancy for the old house and its associations. It belonged to her church, the only true church to her ; mass had been celebrated under its roof ; and, in the twilight of quiet evenings, shut out as it were from the world, priests had here read their breviaries and prepared for repose. These were attractions for her ; she fancied that there was an air of quiet sanctity around the place into which evil could never enter ; and though my father had often in times of irritation denounced Romanism and threatened to remove and go to some other abode, yet she had had sufficient influence over him to persuade him to remain ; for the longer my mother continued in the house the more disinclined she was to leave it,

and, after some time, my father became affected by a similar feeling, and looking on the old dwelling as a pleasant, healthy, and desirable home, he gave up all idea of leaving it for any other.

My parents lived on and off in this house for many years. At the time they first took possession of it my brother was very young, only just able to walk ; my sister was but an infant only a few weeks old ; and about two years afterwards, as I have been informed, I was born in the city and brought down here to be nursed in what was called the "big room," the largest in the house, and one farthest from those most frequently occupied ; a quaint old room to many, but a treasured spot to my mother, and a favorite apartment to me. Here I spent the greater part of my infant life, and the term of my vaccination ; here my baby shrieks and cries were smothered, or wafted away out on the clear air, or drawn up the great chimney, down which the curious ivy sometimes peered as if to see what was the matter ; here I first paid some of the primal penalties of existence, in the shape of the measles, the croup and the whooping-cough ; and here at my mother's knee I was shown those great rudimentary characters of literature, and taught to lisp the magical names of A, B, C.

It was here in this chamber that I had my earliest matriculation as an architect and as an artist. Here I first built, or rather scooped out, my little boats, and launched my pretentious merchantmen, and sent them off on perilous voyages across a pent up ocean in a wash-basin, while I stood by, and, boreas-like, blew down heavy gales and sudden gusts, which sometimes split the tiny paper mainsails of the venturous craft, or left these with their towering masts—fully three inches long—upset like helpless wrecks upon the imaginary deep. Here I built my windmills, and with the same motor—my puffed

cheeks—set their huge arms—made of little bits of cardboard—to revolve when the breeze on the window-sill was insufficient; and it was from the same window, which commanded an extensive view of the harbor, and the grand scenery around, that I drew my first sketches of mountains, of islands, and of the ocean; of big ships and little sailors; of great steam vessels with immense paddle wheels, and with a train of dense clouds of smoke in a long line behind; of the "Semiramis" guard ship firing a broadside, while the captain with an enormous cocked-hat, and a telescope the length of himself, was to be seen fixed somehow like a culprit at the mast head, which I suppose I thought at the time was the post of honor; and then I drew pictures of mighty waves, and big fishes, all of course imagined by me to be perfect representations of what I had seen or heard of; and I also drew castles and forts; kings with towering crowns; officers with great drawn swords; rows of soldiers, rank and file, with guns disproportionately long, all in terrible array on a slate or piece of paper six or eight inches wide, and all of which were in my estimation, fully equal to the appreciation of many older artists of their own crude productions, wonderful efforts of genius; more particularly so because these efforts seemed to surprise my poor dear mother, and to win the repeated encomiums of her, to whom of course they had been first exhibited.

Well, here I was in the dear old room again. My mother and my sister were with me. My father who had to attend to business in the city came down to see us once or twice a week—it was only a short and pleasant trip on the steamboat—and my brother had to remain there at school.

Poorly as I felt, I was pleased to be in Cove again. Indeed I think I never enjoyed life more than I did during that particular visit to the old house. Though I was very weak I felt

no pain, but in my languid condition could lie and count the ticking of the tall clock which stood in the hall, or listen for hours at a time to my sister while she read some choice tale of travel or adventure. And then my mother would amuse me in her own way. She would tell me ever so many little stories while I lay, with my head on her lap, looking up into her clear truthful eyes, at her mild face, and at her brown wavy hair. Even now I still see the sweet, meek, endearing expression of her countenance, I can hear her loving words of sympathy and encouragement, and I can remember how delighted I used to feel to be assured that as soon as I got well enough to run about again—which of course was not to be long—what pleasant little excursions we were to take to romantic spots, and what boat-rides we should have to Spike Island and about the harbor, besides little Jane was to come with us also—little Jane, the fair-haired, rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed companion of my sister, but indeed more my companion than hers, for Jane would prefer to be in-doors with me whenever I felt very poorly than to be out with Ellen airing their dolls in the garden. Little Jane's preference for me was strongly marked; she was more sympathetic than my sister, and then she had such an artless confiding disposition, that on the whole—though it may be a shame for me to say it—I think I somehow felt really more attached to Jane, our young friend, than I did to Ellen my sister.

On dull rainy days—and these came very often—when my head ached, and when my limbs felt so tired, Jane would remain in the room with my mother and keep us company. Ellen would be in some other apartment, or it might be with the girl in the kitchen. There were certain times when my sister became restless and disliked to read or to remain long at a time in one place, and then she would be, as it were, all over the house; and,

while the fit was on her, she would even dash out under a heavy shower of rain and return dripping and blushing like a rose.

But there little Jane would sit contentedly the gloomiest day, her beautiful face shining like a sunbeam, reading for me, or talking to my mother, or adding to the already overstocked wardrobe of her favorite doll ; or in her livelier moments she would take the hands of this miniature likeness of herself and skip with it about the room like a fairy—and to me what a perfect little fairy she was at the time. She would show me her doll's best bonnet, and I felt so interested in dolls just then—probably because she liked them—that I gave up my boats, windmills, and sketches, and helped to make a doll for her myself, I also managed to make it a hat which had a great feather ; little Jane made it a grand dress, and though Ellen ridiculed me, I nursed this doll at times with as much interest and attention as if I had been a girl.

But then there were gloomy days, and times when neither boats, nor dolls, nor anything else could interest or amuse me. There were dreary nights when I lay restless and feverish, and long hours when I could get no sleep. I was one evening almost in a kind of stupor, quite indifferent to life ; if I had any wish at the time it was for death. Making an effort, however, I managed to speak a few words. "Ma," said I, looking up languidly at my mother, "Is it hard to die?"

"To die !" She grew alarmed and said, "O, dear child ! why do you ask such a question ?"

"Only I wanted to know whether it would pain me to die."

"My love and my darling," said she, growing still more alarmed, "you must not think of such a thing." She stooped and pressed her lips upon my forehead. I could see her eyes brimful of tears, and then she whispered, "The good are not afraid to die, it is not pain to them, for they are always ready.

You are good, my darling, but—but you are scarcely yet prepared for death—no not yet. O, my love, you must not die now, you must not leave me.”

After a pause I said, “I will not die now, ma.” I replied very feebly, for I felt myself growing weaker. I must have swooned or slept. In a kind of dream I found it dark at first, but soon it became bright, and I saw some beautiful creatures around me. Their fluttering wings fanned my brow with fragrance, and I heard faint strains of music which were exquisite. It seemed to me that I held a little wand, and, when I waved it, all appeared to smile, and I could hear sweet voices singing.

How long I remained this way I know not, but when I opened my eyes they rested first on my mother who was gazing at me sorrowfully through her tears. Jane and Ellen on either side of me, were waving fans to give me more air, and there was our maid kneeling at the foot of the bed, as if she were praying for my soul. I felt my hands closed on something. In one I found there had been placed a lighted wax candle—one of those blessed tapers which my mother always kept in the house—and, in the other, my hold was on a crucifix. Looking deliberately at these, and then into every face again, I smiled. Thinking, no doubt, that I was about to depart, the blessed candle and crucifix had been put into my hands, as is customary towards those dying in the True Church; holy water had been sprinkled upon me; and though I was not at the time one of the “faithful,” these little acts were an affecting proof of the great sincerity and tender devotion of my dear mother. These were the only resources at her disposal—in what was then to her a dread and sudden emergency—to place if possible the soul of her little heretic son, in some manner, within the fold, so that it should not be found among those outside the pale, who must be condemned as castaways.

"Ma," said I, reaching her the candle and the crucifix, "take these; I am not going to die; I shall live with you and stay with you forever."

"Oh, God bless you, God bless you, my darling, for those heavenly words—my precious jewel will not be taken from me." She was almost overcome with joyful emotion and had to lie down by my side. I now felt exceedingly happy. I held my mother's hand and kept her close to me, and after a time, when everything was very quiet, Jane, who sat sewing near me, commenced to sing a soft melody. It was the first time I had ever heard her voice in song, and what a sweet angelic voice it then seemed—a lulling sound that my sensitive ear could listen to forever. I made efforts to catch the timid lay; the voice of the little angel had a mysterious soothing effect; I listened again and my eyes became dim with tears, and I had to sob quietly to myself lest I should hush the voice; but the soft angelic strain was still heard, and while I yet listened, and sobbed, my ears were filled with the delicate harmony, my weary eyelids were closed, and I fell into a gentle slumber and dreamt of heaven.

Many times after this, little Jane's gentle voice brought me repose; and when my mother's soft strains were added, and those also of my sister, the blended melody was a lullaby that was irresistible, and sleep always followed. In my last moments, ere the slumber of death closes my eyes forever, oh, that such voices may reach my ear, and hush me to eternal rest!





CHAPTER IV.

THE SPECTRE PRIEST.

MY father was a native of Liverpool, England. He once held a position as an officer of some kind in the Royal Navy, and many of his intimate friends called him "Captain" Fairband,—his name on the door-plate of our house was simply "John Fairband, Esq." Having come into the possession of a fair legacy, he left the service, formed a business connection in Ireland with Mr. Daniel Casey—the father of little Jane—and got married to my mother, who was a native of the "beautiful city."

"Fairband & Casey," was a firm well known in Cork as purveyors of stores mostly for government ships, and was once reputed wealthy. Some losses had however occurred, and in consequence of these as well as some peculiar fluctuations in trade, the firm, at the time of my birth though doing a fair share of business, was far from being as prominent or as influential as it once was. My father was not a person over anxious to amass a great fortune, he was content with moderate success; and his partner was, in this respect, much of the same disposition. They had been already for some years together, they had full confidence in each other, and their intercourse was generally very cordial. Though the partners differed much in personal appearance, and somewhat in temper—my father being tall and thin and hasty in manner, and

Mr. Casey being short and stout, and not easily excited—they managed business matters agreeably enough, the one never countermanding the orders of the other. Any dispute that ever occurred between them was mostly on subjects foreign to anything concerning trade, and related to the subject of nationality, or, nine times out of ten, to that of religion.

Strange that this should be, but so it was. My father had very English ideas in connection with his native country ; he was a most rigid Protestant, and at certain times, particularly when he was peevish or irritated, he would say something the reverse of complimentary of the poorer class of the Catholic Irish, and of the Catholic Church and its clergy ; and although he would not always address his remarks to his partner—seldom in fact to any one in particular—yet Mr. Casey would generally reply in defence of his countrymen, his Church, and the Catholic priests, and would retaliate by saying a few caustic words about English injustice to Ireland, about the atrocities of Cromwell, and the noted rapacity of the great State Church. Indeed nothing seemed to disturb the equanimity of Mr. Casey in any marked way unless it were such allusions ; he could hear of dullness in business or of losses in trade, without any apparent effect on his temper ; yet one would think that my father—who must have known his partner's vulnerable points—seemed to take a strange pleasure or satisfaction in causing him to become excited in this way. After their transient disagreements there might be a coolness between the principals for a few days, but it would soon wear away and be all right again ; both evidently ashamed of the misunderstanding.

But, worse than this, there were occasions when my father would come home in a fretful mood as if dissatisfied with everything. After having vented his spleen against one thing and another he would end by a tirade against popery. He would

denounce the doctrines and ceremonies of the Roman Church as being semi-heathenish and superstitious, and assert his surprise that any person of ordinary reason, or common sense, or intelligence should be the adherent of such a delusive system. My poor mother, though, as it were, compelled to listen to expressions uttered against what was most sacred to her, would feel very much grieved, but would seldom make a reply, she bore this cross meekly. I know that her love for him was most ardent, and that her first impulse daily was to pray for his conversion to what she devoutly considered the True Faith. As a fond wife and a mother she must have been dreadfully pained at heart to find, not only her husband, but her little sons, outside the pale of the true Church, and any moment liable to be cut off and doomed forever with other unbelievers.

My, father, I well know, used to feel sorry for having said anything to hurt her feelings, particularly when he was fully satisfied that for one thousand offences of this kind he had always had one thousand ready pardons ; but I question if he ever knew how sincerely, how fervently, and how constantly his fond wife prayed to the Virgin Mother for his and for my escape from heresy, for our acceptance within the orthodox fold, and for that great salvation which she believed none could obtain who did not acknowledge the mission and authority of the Roman Pontiff.

It is curious to see the heads of a family at issue on a subject considered so important as that of a religious creed. In Ireland particularly, it is quite common to see parents as well as children, differ materially as to theological beliefs ; and while all else might be harmony and love, the spectral hand of Polemics has come to wave the household apart, and thus contention and disunion was almost sure to follow. In our family we, unfortunately, worshipped at different altars. Previous to my

mother's marriage, some peculiar arrangement had been made whereby it was agreed that any boys coming into the family should become Protestants and follow the particular creed of my father, while any girls that might be introduced, should be brought up to the Catholic faith. Therefore, while my father and brother and I were of the so-called reformed religion, my mother and my sister were members of the Church of Rome.

Besides this, differences of opinions of the same kind were entertained by most of our other relatives. My mother had a sister who had been a nun; she had a brother who was a priest; and my maternal grandmother was a most devoted Catholic. My father's brother was a Protestant clergyman; his sister, my aunt, Catharine, was married to a Presbyterian, and was a very rigid Methodist; and with regard to some of our other relations, I had heard that one was a Baptist, another a Unitarian, and that another was a most exemplary Quaker. As matters were, not many of these kindred chanced to meet. It might have been that a family reunion was neither sought after nor cared for. Religious differences must have alienated them in some degree, for I remember that on one occasion, very long ago, several of our connections assembled—it may have been at a Christmas time—and I know that the meeting was not altogether the most agreeable; for, before they had separated, some grave and obstinate discussions happened to take place between Protestants and Catholics as to which was the true church; and there were some bitter arguments, even among our Protestant relatives, in reference to the real intent and meaning of certain rather ambiguous texts. I also remember that these strange differences of opinion regarding religion made a singular impression on my mind, and many a time I thought about them afterwards.

Well, another month had nearly passed, and I was getting

better. I had been out two or three times on short excursions and was growing stronger every day ; still I was far from being rugged, and great care was yet necessary to secure my convalescence, and on dull, misty or rainy days—which somehow came very often—I had to remain in close confinement within doors, and to retire early ; and many a time at night when I could not sleep, and when all in the house were perhaps slumbering soundly, I would grow tired of counting the window-panes, crosswise and lengthways, as I had counted them a hundred times before, and of shaping imaginary forms out of the hangings, or drapery, or carvings, and of looking at the patterns on the wall paper becoming monks and nuns in different attitudes of devotion. At such times I used to fancy all kinds of things. I used to think of other days when worshippers assembled in this apartment ; for it had been the private chapel of the priory. Now the room would seem to be full of penitents attending a midnight mass, I could almost hear the “ *Dominus vobiscum*,” and the response, “ *Et cum spiritu tuo* ;” even the tinkling of the bell would in a manner faintly reach my ear. And then I could fancy myself standing aside and unobserved, and could see the quaint spectral forms counting beads, and hear the murmur of their prayers ; and once—I shall never forget the time—when I imagined that a number of persons were present, I suddenly opened my eyes, and close to the recess where the altar once stood, I could see, even in the gloom, the dim form of a priest—for the figure wore a soutaine—his head seemed to be bent, and I distinctly heard a sigh that caused me to be perfectly awake.

When a child I had often been interested, or rather almost frightened, by ghost stories. We had a servant-maid named Nelly Carberry, who used to tell me a hundred wonderful things about witches, and fairies, and veritable ghosts. She

slept in a little apartment adjoining the big room where I lay, and, many and many a night, Nelly would sit on the side of my bed and relate such weird and gloomy tales until I fell asleep.

Though this pernicious practice of wild and absurd narration on the part of our maid did not make me altogether an actual coward—afraid to be alone in the dark—or affect me to as great a degree as, no doubt, such a practice had affected others as well as children, yet it made me timid ; and this night I was particularly so. I looked again for a moment at the figure before me, it was plainly a priest, now he actually moved ! I hurriedly drew the clothes over my head, I dared not look any longer ; still, after a little reflection, I ventured to look again, but nothing could be seen of the apparition.

The night at last wore away. I slept scarcely a minute until daylight, and I watched anxiously for the early dawn. How glad I was to see the first sunbeam on the distant hills ! At breakfast that morning I told them of what I had seen. My sister only laughed at my story ; little Jane in her pretty way said it was nothing but fancy, but my mother, I thought, looked rather grave ; she might have imagined that my illness had had some injurious mental effect. She asked me one or two questions as to what I had seen, and then, upon a little reflection, she cheered me by saying it was a mere illusion ; and before night came again I was fully assured and satisfied that my eyes had greatly deceived me.

Not long after this, however, I awoke one night again. It was clear moonlight. I must have slept for some hours, for I felt no inclination at the time to sleep any longer. I lay in bed looking at the brightness of a moonbeam on the floor, and watching the cloud-shadows which crossed it at intervals. Everything around was very quiet, and I could plainly hear

the ticking of the old clock. I had one of my usual waking dreams, and I was shaping and mingling possibilities and impossibilities at random. We were to have another excursion on the morrow ; little Jane was to be with us, I was in a happy frame of mind, and had altogether forgotten the alleged spectre of imagination that had but a short time ago disconcerted me on a night of greater darkness. My dream picture was beautifully colored and exquisitely tinted. It had a floral bordering of the richest description. There were the cloudless sky above, the green earth beneath, and the sunlit isles and soft blue waves in the distance ; and there were also the usual number of piping shepherds and blushing shepherdesses, and little skipping lambs ; and, to complete all, Jane and I could be seen walking together, side by side, in a kind of enchanted vale in which was to be found nothing but eternal youth and happiness.

Ah me ! Are we not all dreamers ? How many live almost altogether in dreams : they are the shadows of our wished-for realities. The rich man will dream of coming honors ; the poor man dreams of content. Our glimpses of the future are mostly but our dreams. Who is not willing to indulge in those delightful fancies of our wakeful hours, those day dreams, that lead us away from the cares and trials of life to the very portals of heaven. Few persons seem to think that their present condition is what it ought to be ; nearly all imagine that they will be distinguished and rewarded at some future time ; and this idea is perhaps the burden of many a life-long dream. The present mostly disappoints our expectations, and we delight in pleasing anticipations as to the future. The learned philosopher, as well as the ignorant peasant, is lavish of time while erecting, and beautifying, and admiring, the aerial structures of his imagination. Wise men, as well as fools, spend most of

their days in the clouds. Every man is his own hero ; and there are few who do not erect pyramids of some kind to their own fancied greatness. Long after such heroes have made their exit and are forgotten, mounds of different altitudes can be traced along the desert of their lives. Our dreams are, as it were, a necessary relaxation ; without such easements or levitations, the realities of life might be only a burden of woe.

While still looking at the moonlight, which had now become lengthened on the floor, I thought I heard a footstep ; I listened for the last sound. The softest possible footfall was heard again ; a kind of stealthy treading, and lo ! there in the moonlit space on the carpet was a long shadow, not the transient obscuration by a cloud, but the well-defined outlines of a human form. I instinctively looked towards the altar recess, part of the partition at the one side of it was open like a door, and there again before me, in the loneliness of night, stood—the priest.





CHAPTER V.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

TO say that I was frightened—almost terrified—would convey but an imperfect idea of my condition. My hair seemed to rise ; I trembled and grew faint ; I tried to scream but I could not. There, at the dead hour of night, was a veritable apparition ; no uncertainty about it this time. I rubbed my eyes and tried to be somewhat collected, but the figure was plainly before me. Small and rather slight, wearing the clerical soutaine ; the head a little bent with a bare spot on the top like a tonsure ; the features mild and intellectual, with a shade of care or rather of sorrow ; a man who had evidently passed middle age, or who had been in the decline of life before death came ; for I now took the form before me to be the ghost of some departed priest whose purgatorial penalties required that he should revisit this old room, in which, perhaps, he had often heard confession, or given absolution, or celebrated mass years before I was born.

I had many a time been told that spirits came surrounded by a kind of halo, but there was nothing of the kind to be seen at the time. The bright moonlight must have absorbed any glimmer that properly belonged to the spectral visitant, yet I could plainly see every feature, every fold in his soutaine, every motion ; it was so bright that I could see to read. He stood,

as I thought, looking with a mournful gaze at something which he held in one of his hands—a look of great intensity—and then came a sigh. I was startled again, but I somehow grew more collected, and a feeling of pity arose in my breast for the afflicted spirit. There however he stood, still gazing at what he held, and just as I was becoming sufficiently calm to look at him without trembling, he gave another sigh deeper than before, he pressed something to his lips, and then covered his face with his hands as if completely overcome by an emotion of the heaviest grief.

I now ventured to raise my head a little, in order to get a more distinct view of the more than shadowy form, and while in this position I imagined I heard the stifled sobs which seemed to tell of a burdened conscience, or of a bleeding heart. What could have disturbed his rest? What restitution had he come back to make? Had he neglected any of his clerical duties, had he refused the last rites of the church to some dying penitent, had he prohibited a place of interment in consecrated ground to the body of one who had died in doubt, or to that of some wretched suicide who had rushed with blood-stained hand unprepared into the presence of his Maker, or had he declined to say the last prayer over the grave of some rejected unbaptized foundling. What cross had he refused to take up? What could have sent him here? Had he, like too many others of the clergy, been worldly, or ambitious, or tyrannical? Or, worse than all, had he been so unfaithful to his clerical vows—his vows of celibacy—that the grave should, as it were, have opened wide and sent him forth a restless ghostly wanderer visible to mortal eyes?

Vague ideas of this kind crossed my mind. I had often been told that unfaithful priests were held more accountable than ordinary mortals, and that their sufferings in purgatory

were ten times more severe than the punishment inflicted on common sinners. Was the poor spirit's heavy anguish an evidence of his great remorse? If tears and sobs were any proof of contrition, here indeed was true repentance. But could it avail him now? Could he derive any benefit from this posthumous atonement? The Protestant's stern reply might be that, according to the Sacred Word, his period of probation had passed; that no pleading petition could now reach the heavenly throne; that time for him was no more, and that after death came judgment. The Catholic on the contrary would assert, that all the faithful who had departed free from the pollution of *mortal* sin, could pass through a purification of fire and become fit for heaven; for, according to the teaching of his Church, he could believe that purgatory was "a place or state of punishment where some souls suffer for a time before they can go to heaven."

Any way, at the moment one might be inclined to believe that the Catholic doctrine was the more benevolent, and that in course of time even the soul of this dejected priest might enter the mansions of glory. The Protestant may feel the greatest intensity of grief, and may weep over the remains of his dearest friend; but his lips are sealed, he prays no more for him whose pulse has ceased forever, and whose eyes are closed in death. If he who has just departed has not "made his calling and election sure," his surviving friends of the reformed faith can pray no more, or hope no more for him, or believe that Divine mercy can, in his case, be further extended. God's power, by this conviction, is in a manner limited; there are no more offers of mercy or reconciliation, and when death comes the tree lies where it falls, and all is finished with the impenitent. The Catholic, on the other hand, though taught to believe that none can be saved who die outside of the pale of

the True Church, can yet pray for the repose of the soul of certain of those who have died within its bosom; he can in addition direct his appeal to numerous heavenly intercessors, he can draw on that great fund which contains pious works of supererogation, and if his heart yearns for the deliverance of the soul of his wife or his child from further purgatorial sufferings, if he have but sufficient means, the most powerful aid of the Church can be evoked. By special application and the payment of the usual fee, the priest can be attired in his canonicals, the taper lighted, the bell rung, and mass can be celebrated at one altar, or a thousand altars, until the afflicted but believing survivor is fully assured that the ponderous gates of the lesser Avernus are opened wide to set free his beloved ones, and that they securely hold the great passport of the Church to Paradise.

While still closely watching every motion of my supernatural visitor, his sobs became more audible and his sighs more frequent. My pity had in a manner almost overcome my fear, and I began to imagine that he was more like a poor troubled mortal than one who, as it were, had escaped from the tomb. If he standing there before me in such tribulation knew anything of my presence he seemed to disregard it altogether, and to give fuller vent to his feelings. I now felt an inclination to sit up in the bed, and just as I was about to do so I heard the latch of the door turn. The spirit must have heard it also. He seemed startled; he glanced at me and looked hastily towards the entrance, I then saw him hurriedly shut a little box-like place or aperture in the wall—something which I had never before noticed—the door-way in the partition was noiselessly closed again, and before I could look around, or utter a word, the priest had disappeared.

I was sitting up when Nelly Carberry entered the room; she

came straight over to my bed. She had seen nothing of what had disconcerted me, but was evidently under the impression that my sleep had been greatly troubled, that I had had no rest, or that I had an attack of some kind and had made efforts to have her hear me.

"Dear boy," said she, rather afraid that I was suffering severely, "what's the matter? Shall I call your ma? I heard you walking about and sobbing; you must be very unwell?"

"No, Nelly," said I at once, "I am not sick, do not call ma, or disturb any one; I am quite well now. I suppose I must have had some kind of a frightful dream and made a noise. You know I have often had them—that is all. You see I am quite well," I repeated, anxious to convince her. "You may stay here if you like and see for yourself, for I shall soon go to sleep again."

As it was I did not care to have Nelly leave me alone, I was nervous and, without letting her see that I was anxious for her company, I wished her to remain. I now knew for certain that she had seen nothing of the apparition, and that she did not even suspect the real cause of my wakefulness. Had she had the least idea that any person or thing of a strange kind, either natural or supernatural, had been so close to her, or to me, she would, I am confident, have alarmed the whole house; for, judging by what I knew of her, she was a very timid girl, and she had a more firm belief in ghostly appearances than I ever had. I therefore discreetly kept my mind to myself, and told her nothing about what I had seen. Indeed, I had determined to tell no person. I did not want my mother to show any more anxious concern as to the state of my health; I did not desire to have Ellen ridicule me again; nor, above all, did I want little Jane to imagine that I was so timid or so credulous as to fancy that my own shadow was a hobgoblin—I would

fain be a hero in her estimation. On her account I tried to feel indifferent as to what I had seen, and, strange to say, when broad daylight made its appearance I had almost persuaded myself that my eyes had again deceived me.

Though I cautioned Nelly Carberry to keep the matter a secret, yet she must have said something to my mother respecting my supposed illness. I intended to ask that Nelly might be allowed—for the sake of company—to sleep in the big room, and I was planning to myself how I should introduce the particular subject, when happily I was saved from a partial confession of fear by being told that an apartment adjoining my mother's down stairs, was being prepared for me. Some reason, which I cannot now remember, was given for this ; indeed I was not over particular in making inquiries, nor did I hint the slightest objection, and though I affected to be indifferent about the change, I was secretly rejoiced ; for I hoped to be able in time to forget the dead priest, to enjoy my night's rest again, and keep from all the knowledge of anything I knew of the ghostly visitor.

The next day I feigned to be a little weary—too tired to take our usual long walk. In truth I was not quite so well as I had been the day before ; I had not got over the effects of an almost sleepless night. This might have been a sufficient excuse to keep me in-doors if I had dared to mention it. However I wanted to be alone. My mother would have remained, but I persuaded her and the girls to pay a promised visit to a friend, and while out they were to make arrangements for another little excursion. Ellen told me I was lazy, Jane pouted a little, but after a while my excuses prevailed and I was left alone. Well, off they went. I might say that I had the whole place to myself, for Nelly Carberry was busy in the kitchen, and I had possession of every key in the house, but I only cared to have

one. I had determined to make a careful search ; now was my opportunity ; and the key that I then clutched with nervous fingers was that which opened and locked my late dormitory—the big room.

When I locked the door inside—something I had never done before—though it was a fine day and the sunlight streaming in through the windows, I somehow felt afraid. I had spent many and many a day in that room, often for hours without a companion, but never before had the same feeling. I had come here, alone and unknown to all, to make a search ; and now, scarcely beyond the middle of bright noon-day, I almost dreaded to be by myself in an apartment that I had been familiar with from infancy. I expected every moment to hear some solemn whisper, or be touched by some icy hand. I looked about me with a kind of apprehension—at the centre-piece in the ceiling, at the long row of windows, at the quaint carving here and there, and at the strange devices surrounding the altar recess. My bed had been already removed, and I stood in the vacant place to have a view from the same point, as near as possible, of the very spot where I saw the apparition. I tried even then to convince myself that there might be some crack in the wall, some discoloration, or, it might be, some hanging cobweb, which, acting in a peculiar manner on the retina, might produce the outlines of a priest and lead my imagination to see him bend, or to hear him sigh. I had been told that it was very possible to be misled in such a way. But there was nothing to be seen that could deceive the eye ; not the faintest trace of anything on wall or ceiling, or anywhere else, that by any effort of the will I could conjure up such an afflicted shade as that which had so recently stood here in the clear moonlight. I tried to feel collected and to reassure myself, yet as I approached the recess a feeling of awe came over

me. I actually trembled as if I had become suddenly very cold, and, as I looked up, I imagined that the two little plaster-of-paris angels, with outstretched wings, that knelt close to the cross inserted over the centre of the archway, frowned upon me as I drew near, as if with the intention of waving me off, or of forbidding me from trespassing on holy ground.

I did however trespass ; I had resolution enough for that. I never in my life was so determined ; still I was by no means free from fear, but I wanted to satisfy a feeling of the greatest curiosity. I wanted if possible to make a discovery, and no remonstrance of any kind would at the time have prevented me. I stood in the recess, on the very spot where the sobbing ghost had revealed his distress. I looked cautiously here and there ; first at the floor—no trace of any footmark whatever—then at the side partition—here it was where the priest-spirit had entered—every thing seemed secure ; and though I pressed my hand against the old carved oaken boards, and even ventured to thump a little on them, they appeared perfectly solid and secure ; there being no difference that I could find between that part of the partition and any other part ; no hollow sound came, and after a most minute and patient examination, I could discover neither keyhole, nor latch, nor spring, nor contrivance of any kind, whereby anything more material than a veritable spirit could find entrance.

I felt discomfited ; my fear rather increased, and I began to regret that I had attempted any such search as I had just made. My natural inquisitiveness had now had its proper deserts. I had dared to doubt, had actually begun to be skeptical. I wanted to be wiser and more astute than others. I had on insufficient evidence recklessly ventured to encourage a disbelief in the legends and traditions which had been handed down,

generation after generation, and which still had the firm belief of persons much older than I was, and much wiser than I ever could expect to be. Then I had just been shown my folly. I began to think that I had been guilty of great presumption. Had I not been so over-curious, had I not gone so far, I might perhaps have still doubted, and have still hoped that some reasonable explanation might be given for such ghostly appearances. As it was, the foundation for any further doubt seemed to have been removed, I had made no discovery, and though lurking suspicions should yet remain ever so strong, I must still be partially a dupe to delusions which I could not explain away.

However I did not like to be baffled too readily. Should I give up because my first attempt had not been successful? I knew not why it was but I had a strong impression that what I had seen and heard the night before was nothing supernatural. The more I thought about it the more material and less spiritual I was forced to consider the appearance that I had seen here, and I thought what a triumph it would be if I could make the least discovery to prove that my suspicions were not altogether unfounded. I wished to be able to satisfy even Nelly, that many of the popular ghost-stories she had so often frightened me with were unreliable and could be explained away; and that not only she, but hundreds of others were regularly deceived by their own credulity.

I recommenced my search, I tried the partition again, I pressed against it with all my might and pounded on it until I became afraid that the noise would be heard all over the house; but the result was the same—no discovery. How was it possible, thought I, that priest, or man, or spirit, or whatever it was, could have entered here and have disappeared again so readily? I had heard that spirits could intrude through a keyhole, or

even through a stone-wall, but the one I had seen had evidently required entrance and exit through a door-way—and this was in fact the real cause of my skepticism—but where was the door? Nowhere. Could I have been mistaken, or was it after all but a dream? I felt partially bewildered, and stood for over a minute to collect my wandering ideas.

“But stay,” thought I, “did he not put something in here?” I had almost forgotten the little place or opening in the wall that the spirit had hurriedly reached at before its departure. It was altogether higher than I could touch, but I could notice nothing in particular from where I stood. There was a small niche on each side of the recess. These were the only openings that were to be seen, and a saint or other little image of some kind—long since removed—had probably occupied one, or both of these places, little ecclesiastical ornaments such as those which can be found in great numbers in some Protestant, as well as in most Catholic churches. I drew over a chair and stood upon that. I looked and searched all over. There was no opening of any kind to be seen in the wall but the niche, and that was vacant. I was about to step down, disappointed again, when I chanced to observe that the little black marble base or pedestal within the niche, upon which the image had once been, was not level; it was partly raised like the cover of a small box. I touched it, and it opened wider. I could perceive a little cavity, one which with proper precaution might have remained forever unnoticed. I thrust in two or three fingers and took out a picture, an exquisitely enamelled portrait. I hurried over to the window so as to get the benefit of the full light, and the sunbeams fell on it—How beautiful!—but there, alas, was the youth and bloom of womanhood in the black drapery of the Church! It was the picture of a nun with a sad expression on the young face. But stay, were not the features familiar? I

scanned them closer. I held the picture far off, then closer—
Amazing!—Surely this could not be!—Impossible!—There must
be some wild dreaming or some mistake. There is a difference,
perhaps the change of time, but still a startling resemblance—
Could this ever have been the likeness of my mother?





CHAPTER VI.

A DREADFUL BURDEN.

IF there are sorrows which make existence an affliction, there are secrets which make life too great a burden. The concealment which forbids the least disclosure, is the cloud which, to a greater or less extent, may dim every hope of the future. There are persons whose corrupt motives, pretensions and designs, render secrecy a necessity ; and many of the prominent actors on the stage of life appear before the world in characters altogether different from those bestowed on them by nature. What masquerading and disguising we see around us, what efforts some of our so-called heroes are forced to make to hide the defects, or the rottenness, or the iniquity which they fear must sooner or later be discovered ! Some have secrets upon which their life may depend ; others have those which alone have given them a spurious popularity. Oh what a tumbling down from great heights there would be were the bosoms of many of our supposed eminent men laid bare ; and what confusion and humiliation would fall upon those who are their servile worshippers. Pretenders are most numerous among those aiming for prominent positions ; and such persons can too often be found acting the part of the patriot, the statesman, the legislator, and the preacher ; and the little secrets relating to their shifts, their stratagems, their cunning, and their meanness, in order to insure recognition, are the thorns

which keep them ill at ease, and make the coveted situation, at times, but one of torment. Concealment is the germ of dissimulation. How many lives are made miserable by the privy which must not be imparted ! Nature may have secrets that can never be discovered ; but man should have none that dare not be revealed. No woe can be more terrible than that which turns the heart into stone, and makes it the sepulchre of some dreadful mystery.

But now, I had a secret, the first I ever had which might really be called such. I had that hidden within my breast which kept me restless and suspicious, and which I dared not reveal to any human being, not even to my mother. Though my disposition was naturally confiding, I became reticent, I felt distrustful of everybody and could not tell her, the dear parent who should have known my thoughts, anything of the burden that was on my mind. If the man whose hand is red with the blood of his fellow, who fears the felon's doom, but who has as yet escaped detection, if this man has his days of dread and his nights of terror, I, with a secret which I imagined was just as dreadful, and which led to such peculiar associations, had my sleepless hours, or slumbers that brought me but dismal dreams.

If the plotter, the betrayer, or the ungrateful, whose vileness was yet unknown, had his qualms, his fears, and his self-reproach, I certainly had mine. I felt as if I were a criminal, or as though I had been guilty of some dreadful act that I wished to keep from the knowledge of all.

Many a time when my mother turned her calm eyes on me, I would blush and feel as if she was trying to peer into my heart in order to discover the very secret that had so often hurried its pulsations. No doubt she soon perceived that I was not so animated as usual, and her anxious look—really caused

by her uneasiness as to the state of my health—frequently led me to suppose that she knew I was hiding from her that which I ought to have at once made known. If my sister upbraided me for my almost sudden desire for retirement, I fancied that every word she said had a double meaning, and that she well knew why it was that I wished so much to be alone; and when little Jane chided me for my apparent indifference to her, and for the strange and unaccountable humors that kept me moody and uncommunicative, I thought she must be on the point of guessing the reason of my inattention. My nature seemed changed. I sometimes wondered at myself. I who had been so open and unreserved, and so fond of the society of those around me, and to whom I was so much attached, now said but little, and rather kept aloof from all. Sometimes, when I was expected to accompany Ellen and Jane in a ramble—a recreation once so attractive—I would disappoint them and wander off by myself, looking out dreamily at the sea or at the misty distance; and I would sit in one spot for an hour or longer wondering—wondering at the apparition I had lately seen, wondering at what I had discovered, and wondering whether the portrait of the nun, with the meek, sad face, had ever been the likeness of my mother.

Nearly three weeks had passed since I had become possessed of that which caused me so much uneasiness. I had often been told that if a nun should leave her convent even to get married she would be disgraced. My secret was therefore a constant torment, and I would have readily given the wealth of the world if I could have approached my mother in my own old way—in the way in which I once took such delight—and asked her for an explanation of the mystery—asked her if she had ever fled from a convent and broken her religious vows. But the very idea was dreadful. She who ought to be the first to

have my confidence was now, beyond all others, the one from whom I desired to withhold it. What a singular estrangement! To whom should I go if not to her! I was so troubled and harassed that I became languid again, my appetite failed, and it was a source of grief to me to see my mother manifest such deep concern as to my failing health. My sister, I saw, was also uneasy about me; and the change from my once genial manner was so perceptible, that little Jane would look at me with brimful eyes and become greatly affected. Their anticipations regarding me were evidently of the gloomiest character.

But what could I do? How was I to get rid of my secret? Young as I was I really dreaded an explanation lest it should in some way involve my mother. I longed to relieve those so dear to me from anxiety on my account. Had I had but a veritable midnight ghost to deal with I might have tried to explain it away; but that which I now had was something entirely different; it was something tangible—that which could be felt and seen; for had I not looked at it a hundred times and tested its positive reality. There in my own room—not in the big room up stairs—hidden away from all but myself, was the portrait. Even the apparition which it had so affected knew nothing now of its whereabouts. A real spirit might perhaps have discovered it, but as the portrait remained with me, I took this fact to be a kind of test which inclined me to believe that something more material than a fading ghost had no doubt already missed the picture which had caused the grief I had witnessed. Yes, the beautiful portrait was still in my keeping; no midnight search had been lately made for it by anything supernatural. I kept it hidden, and, like some mystical gem, it seemed to have a fascinating influence which sooner or later must prove fatal to its possessor. Were not its effects on me already apparent?

Every night and morning since I first held it in the full light—and I was unhappy from that moment—I stole a look at the nun's face. The likeness at times was startling! and every morning after my first salutation I glanced furtively at my mother's features only to have my suspicions more and more confirmed. Once or twice, in a kind of desperation, I took out the beautiful portrait with the intention of flinging it as far as I could into the sea, but when I stood alone upon the shore the timid eyes of the picture seemed to plead with me, the wind seemed to rebuke me, and the waves to rush farther up on the strand as if to warn me away. Oh, how could I do it! Even without these forbiddings my heart would surely fail; for at the last moment my hand would refuse to loosen its grasp, and I would be forced to return with that which was the cause of all my trouble.

After this I thought of making a confidant of Nelly Carberry. In our familiar intercourse I know she told me more relating to herself than she would have told to anyone else, and as she knew something of my mother's history, I trusted that she might be able to explain the mystery; but when the moment came I could confide nothing, and I shrank away from her as I had from all others. As a last resolve, however, I determined to await the return from the city of an old domestic, a kind of general serving-man who had lived with us longer than I could remember, who in fact was looked on as one of the family, and who I supposed knew all about our family affairs for generations. He was one in whom I must trust; indeed I might safely tell him anything; for I came to the conclusion that if I did not very soon repose confidence in some person I should become almost distracted. I therefore longed for his return; he should hear my story, and I should show him the picture; but in the meantime my secret must remain with me, burdensome and oppressive as ever.

One day after this I sat alone in the big room trying to read. I held the book before me, but my eye ran down the page without the least knowledge of its contents ; I was rather brooding as usual. I now visited this apartment oftener than formerly, in the faint but vain hope that even in the broad daylight the spectre-priest might come to seek for that which he had probably missed from the receptacle, in which he no doubt thought he had safely deposited it. I had a strong impression that he would make an effort to recover it again, and that in his anxiety he would leave his retirement, or his resting place, or his grave, and trespass here—even at the risk of discovery—to gaze once more, if possible, on the beloved picture. He came not however ; or at least he never came while I was there, or, it might be, while the sunlight streamed into the room ; he might have perhaps stolen in again with the moonbeams, and have sighed again in the silence of night, and have disappeared again before dawn. He might have done so, for I certainly would not have been there at such an hour to watch his movements, as nothing could tempt me to remain, once more, a moment in that particular room after dark.

Any way, though not too courageous, but rather a little timid, I often went there during daylight, and when others were within the sound of my voice. Time after time, sadly puzzled, I would search for what I fancied must be a private entrance, and this day again, being very earnest, and in no particular danger of being interrupted, I laid my book aside and examined the partition as closely as I could ; but as usual I had to give over without making any discovery.

I was standing in the recess looking up at the vacant niche considering whether anything else might be hidden within it, for I had not examined it since I drew out the picture, when I was suddenly but softly touched on the shoulder. I instinc-

tively shrank back. Was I not alone! I partly looked around and a momentary terror seized me, for there at my very side and on the very spot once trodden by the spectral priest stood the black-draped figure of the nun!

My sight grew dim. I thought I should have fallen. I turned away in sore dread. My knees trembled, and just as I was about to sink to the floor, I heard an angelic voice. I found sufficient courage to look up, and oh! how great was my relief when I saw that it was only my mother.

She had entered the room so softly that I did not hear her footsteps. She often wore a dark dress, and this day she had on one of that kind. Besides this she had carelessly thrown a kind of black scarf over her head, and while in this garb, my imagination, as well as my fear, betrayed me into the belief that she was the veritable nun.

"O ma," said I scarcely above a whisper, and while still trembling, "how like you are to the picture!"

"To what picture, dear?"

"To the picture in my room." I now felt that I had almost involuntarily let out my secret, and the words had been scarcely uttered before I regretted having spoken them.

"My dear, my dear," she replied. "I wish I could be more like that sacred picture in every respect. Oh what beauty indeed it would be to be in the least degree like the Mother of God, the ever-blessed Mary, the Queen of Heaven, who so loves all, that her potent intercessions, for us poor sinners, to her divine Son, are made unceasingly, and will continue to be made for the faithful for ever, and ever, and ever."

I saw in a moment that I had but just escaped and that my secret was still safe. The picture she alluded to was one of the "Virgin," which in her tender and motherly piety she had placed at the head of my bed as a kind of protection even for

her heretic child. As it was I felt greatly relieved and breathed more freely, and I became as reluctant as before to impart any information concerning that other picture which was, I might say, constantly in my view.

"But my dear child," continued she with a feeling of alarm, "you look frightened. What is the matter? You are getting very nervous, and I see that you are every day losing strength. O my dear," said she kissing me tenderly, "what would I not give to see you restored to health, and what happiness it would be to me to know that the holy, immaculate Mary could regard you as one of her own children."

Before I could speak another word I had to sit on the nearest chair. I had nearly betrayed myself in what I had already said, and I grew at once more cautious. I felt confused just as if I had been detected in the commission of some improper act. My breathing became heavy, and, as I leant my head against her bosom she must have heard my heart beating wildly.

"I did not hear you enter the room ma," said I faintly, "and you know I am sometimes easily startled."

"Too much so, John, too much so. My dear, you are greatly changed, I wish I could relieve you. See how your heart flutters"—her hand was pressed over it—"and your once red cheek is now so pale, and your poor eyes look so sad. I wish Shawn was with us again; you always liked his company; and you are his favorite. We are all greatly troubled about you. Ellen and Jane talk about you nearly all the time, and they are quite lonely now. You are very much altered. Tell me where your pain is, dear, the doctor cannot let us know. Tell me the cause of this distressing change."

No doubt she asked the questions without expecting anything like a correct answer, or any answer at all from me, but disconcerted and almost guilty as I felt at the moment, I

expected that her next query would relate to my torturing secret.

"I have no pain, ma, not the least. I wish Shawn was here to take me over to the island. I would like to sit with him on the rocks again, and watch the sea as we used to do. I shall get well when he comes." I made no other reply.

She led me towards the window, and, when seated, drew me close to her. She looked at me affectionately and after a pause said, "My dear child I have something to say to you, something very important, and I have been anxious for a long time to speak to you on a matter dearest to my heart. We are alone now and I must delay it no longer."

She remained silent for a few moments as if to collect her thoughts, and I looked up into her clear eyes which were aglow with sincerity and tenderness.

"My dear boy the subject which I am going to mention, is one which my duty not only as a mother but as a Christian woman forbids me to delay any longer; it has been on my mind for years—from the time when you lay a baby in your cradle. And more than once, when I feared for your life, Oh how terrible the thought was that if you had been taken from us you might have been lost to us forever—lost to me both here, and, dreadful to think of, perhaps even in the great hereafter! Your health is very uncertain, and it almost maddens me to be forced to believe that if you were cut off as you now are—outside of the true fold—your future condition would no doubt be most deplorable. I must therefore speak. The subject is of all others the most momentous. We should think alike on that; you are now old enough to understand its great significance, and to feel that you are a responsible being and will be held accountable like all others. I shall hide nothing from you. I desire that we shall travel the

same road to eternity, and that there shall be nothing secret between us.

She paused again. I saw her anxious expression. I scarcely knew the meaning of all she said but I had an impression that she was going to reveal something long kept to herself. "Now it is coming," thought I. I turned from the light to hide my face. "She must have found it out, she must have discovered something and is going to tell me all." My lips seemed cold, my mouth felt parched, and I began to regret that I had kept my secret from her so long ; now she will know everything, and reproach me for my want of candour.

She took my hand and held it in hers, and after having looked at me wistfully for a while, she said, scarcely above a whisper, "John, O John, my dear child, you are a Protestant !"

"Am I, ma?" said I, hesitating a little. "And what are you?"

"A Catholic, dear ; a member of the Holy Roman and Apostolic Church, out of which none can be saved."

As yet I scarcely could understand her meaning. . Almost from my very infancy I used to hear people speak of Catholics and Protestants ; some in approval of the one, or in dislike of the other. Indeed I had often heard my father speak against the Church of Rome, but his declamation seemed to have had but little effect at home. I had a kind of idea that what was called religion was in some way or other a prolific source of contention ; for Catholics and Protestants appeared to agree on most other subjects. *That* was always an exception. Those of both creeds had alike been kind to me, and I drew no distinction which could lead me to look on one more favorably than on the other ; and so far as I understood what religion was I might have been of any creed without knowing the reason

why. I remember I used to pray, but my simple prayers were a curious medley. Those which my mother taught me—and which I generally used—were mingled invocations to saints and angels, and to the Virgin ; and those which I learned from my aunt—my father's sister, who sometimes came to see us, and who was rigid in her belief—were directed to God alone ; I dare not lisp to any other heavenly influence. I said my aunt was rigid, for her views of eternal punishment, and what she told me of the wretched condition of the unconverted, and the great difficulty in escaping from perdition, sometimes really alarmed me ; and her teaching led me to imagine that the Divine Being was very stern and exacting, and at that time he was one in whom I verily stood in great dread. Any way, though my prayers to any power had no particular meaning for me, and though I knew little or nothing as to the import of the words I used, yet I liked my mother's prayers the best, and had I to choose any religion, I should of course be then of the creed that she professed.

"But why am I a Protestant, ma ?" continued I, curious as to her explanation.

"Because you were baptized in that faith," she replied.

"And are you a Catholic, because you were baptized, as you call it, a Catholic ?"

"I suppose so," answered my mother after a little hesitation ; "but now I know that that is the true faith."

"And I'd be a Catholic, too, if I had been baptized one, would I, ma ?"

"You would, my dear ; and it would have been a happy day for you and for me also."

"Are pa and William Protestants for the same reason ? are they ma ?"

"Yes dear, it must be on that account that your father and

your brother are Protestants. Such they were baptized, and such they have as yet remained."

"And you, and Ellen, and little Jane, are all Catholics?"

"We are, my dear."

"Could any one be baptized over again, ma?"

"Yes, if a person desired to change his faith."

"Then, if I wanted to be a Catholic, could I be baptized one?"

"You could child. You could be made a Catholic, a member of the true Church, in a single hour."

"Then, ma, I want to be a Catholic, I want to be what you, and Ellen, and—and little Jane are."

"Oh, thank God, thank God!"

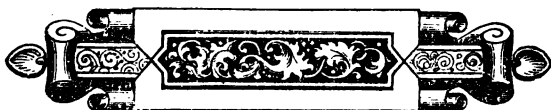
She had scarcely made these hurried exclamations before she pressed me tenderly to her breast and kissed me repeatedly,—
"Oh, thank God, dear child, that he has put this desire into your heart! My constant prayer to his blessed mother has been at last answered."

"But, ma," said I again, "wouldn't you like that pa, and William, as well as I, should also become Catholics?"

"I would, my dear, I would. I have offered many a prayer for their conversion, and I still hope. But the longer one delays from embracing the true faith the more difficult it is to overcome unholy prejudices against it. You have often no doubt heard your father speak slightly of my religion, and I have seldom replied lest he should become more hostile or indifferent to the truth. Morning, noon and night I shall continue my prayers for him and your brother. But, my dear," said she, lowering her voice, "we must not let your pa know anything of what we intend doing with regard to you. You must not speak to him or to your aunt Catherine on the subject of religion. It might undo us. Much as it is against my

nature to dissemble, or to do in secret that which ought to be done openly, I have for your sake to dissemble now with him. It pains me to do so ; even sometimes I think it wrong ; yet I feel that in a matter of such vast importance as your conversion, or the conversion of any human soul, there can be little or no wrong in working for such an end ; there cannot I think be any sin in the adoption of such methods as we may find necessary to bring poor stray sheep into the fold. But I know your father well, John. Were he even to suspect what our intentions now are, were your aunt to hear anything of it and inform him, his anger would be terrible, and he might separate us forever.





CHAPTER VII.

SHAWN BAWN.

I HAVE now to speak of one of the truest, one of the best, and one of the most noble creatures it has ever been my good fortune to meet. We had an old serving man, or rather an old follower, whose name in Irish was Shane, or Shawn Bawn—Shawn was the familiar name by which he was always known—and he was one whom I must ever remember with feelings of gratitude and affection. He had been engaged by my father years before I was born, and I believe my mother knew him from the time she was a girl. Any way, Shawn having been well liked and well treated, he became perfectly satisfied with his situation, and it seemed to be tacitly understood by him as well as by my parents that the engagement was to be perpetual.

My father placed the greatest reliance on him for his well-proved fidelity, and my mother became very much attached to him for his kind, gentle disposition and goodness of heart ; in fact I knew that it was her impression that his equal for genuine nobleness could not be found on earth, and that his superior could be found only among the saints in heaven. Shawn was the one with us who looked after things generally ; he went on various little errands, and was exclusively entrusted with those of business importance ; besides this he did many little odd jobs about the place, and, unless at rare intervals, he was, as long

as I can remember, the one who generally accompanied me in my juvenile rambles. He had the interest of our family so much at heart, and so disinterested was he in our behalf, that he was treated by us all more like a relative than a poor dependant. Though he had a wife and children, yet he spent nearly all his time with us ; and I know for a certainty that almost every shilling he received was sent to them. They lived in a very humble place in the suburbs of the city and he went to see them once a week, generally on Saturday evening, returning to us—home, as he called it—on Monday morning ; and it made no difference whether we were at our house in town, or at our place in Cove, where we went he evidently thought it his duty to follow.

Strange to say that though Shawn was in one sense but a poor, illiterate Irish peasant—neither able to read nor write—yet he was a man of wonderful powers of mind, his forethought and discrimination were surprising, and his intuition almost unerring. This was generally admitted, for all seemed to defer to him ; even my father when in his most impetuous state would listen to what he might say, and in important as well as in trifling matters his advice was often asked and as often followed. Still while Shawn, if he chose, might have been a kind of dictator among us—as too many pampered domestics come to be—he was far otherwise, he was very unobtrusive and in most respects as simple and submissive as a child.

The most careless observer could scarcely pass Shawn Bawn without noticing that he was different from most other men. There was something so peculiar in his manner, and so expressive in his mild, benevolent, thoughtful face, that a feeling stronger than ordinary respect was sure to follow. In personal appearance he always looked the same to me, and I sometimes used to fancy that he never grew any older. He was a man

probably between fifty and sixty years of age, not tall but of a medium height, being spare and sinewy in form. His sage-like face inclined to be oval, his complexion brown or dark, his features singularly pleasing and regular, his eyes black, and his hair, once perhaps of the raven color, had now its plentiful intermixture of gray. He generally was close-shaved, which I fancied gave his face at times a kind of clerical cast; yet as he went along, rather stooped in form and with eyes bent to the ground, there was on the whole something of a resigned careworn look about him which awoke your commiseration.

Ah me, what a large part of my heart had this poor unassuming man! I was always one of his greatest favorites. When I was scarcely able to walk he used to carry me about on his back; and in course of time when I was old enough to trot along by his side, he would take me to such pleasant places. He never appeared to be so well satisfied as when we were away alone where nature was most lavish of her charms; for he had a great love for the wild and beautiful. He would shew me mountain slopes, and great rugged rocks; he would point out some bold cliff or some hoary castle; he would trace winding rivers, winding far away among distant hills; he would lead me to where there were green fields and feeding cattle; he would take me to quiet, shaded vales, where we could hear little murmuring streams, or we would wander away until we came to some beautiful lake studded with islands; and often he would bring me to some height from which we had an extensive view, and from which we could see hill, and vale, and river, and stream, and look down upon the wide, wide sea, as if the whole world was beneath us.

And then what lessons of wisdom I had from his lips; whenever we went out he was able to interest me until our return. There was scarcely a spot having any historical associations,

but what he was able to give the principal events connected with it—events which perhaps had taken place centuries before—just as well, and far more impressively than if they had been read to me out of a book.

He could give me the names of leading men who had lived and died in certain neighborhoods; of the owners of great estates, and their dissolute heirs expectant; of oppressive landlords and clergy, and of many of the despoiled tenantry who had been driven to vagrancy, or to foreign lands, because they had been unable, or unwilling to pay exorbitant rents, or the scandalous imposition then known as tithes; and he could point to cairns in lonely spots where unfeeling middle-men and inhuman agents had been waylaid and had forfeited their lives. He could give me the history of every old church, every old castle, and every old ruin in a whole parish; and sometimes we would enter an old graveyard, and though he could not read the name, or the text, or the eulogy on a single tomb, yet he could tell me who lay here or there, how avarice or ambition had hurried one man out of existence, or how poverty and hardship had cut short the days of another. And then he would moralize, in his own simple way, on the prominent follies of mankind, and show how that after their various intrigues, and struggles, and trials, death had placed them all here on a level, and that here as they lay in the silence and night of the grave, there could be no further distinction between the nobleman and the beggar, or between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Shawn could also entertain me in other ways. He could tell me something about flowers, and plants, and trees; about the habits of the birds that flew around us, and of the little wild animals that we met on our excursions. He could tell me when to expect a change of weather, and when it was going to be fine or stormy; why the clouds looked red or black, or

like molten gold ; and why the rainbow came with its beautiful colors. He could tell me about fishes great and small ; of how the waves had washed away the land, and cut their way through solid rocks, and burrowed out great caves, and raised high cliffs ; and then he could point out treacherous reefs and dangerous shoals, and give me the names of ships that were cast away along the coast years before I was born.

Such was the companion, the guide, and the instructor I had in Shawn Bawn. As I have said before, he could neither read nor write ; and as far as ordinary learning went he was perfectly illiterate, yet the wonderful powers of his mind led him to observe and to investigate. He would learn from a child, he would make discoveries where others saw but blank barrenness, and, as his memory was very retentive, the result was that little by little his knowledge of many things became extensive, and his store of information surprising. He was poor, having neither land nor house nor anything laid by to meet a season of adversity ; he had nothing but the trifling wages that were paid him weekly, and such little gifts as he might receive from time to time. With this humble store he seemed perfectly content. He tried to feel satisfied with the pittance that was sufficient to provide for the daily wants of himself and those depending on him, yet even out of this he managed to save something for the poor, as none could be more charitable than he ; and if he ever wished for more, if he ever yearned for the wealth or possessions that were entirely beyond his reach, it would be for the simple purpose of relieving the wants of others ; for the prevailing distress of the many around him seemed to be his greatest affliction. He was humble and unobtrusive to a remarkable degree, yet he was possessed of great natural dignity, and while he cheerfully performed even the menial duties pertaining to his situation, nothing could induce him to do an improper act to satisfy any

one ; for there was not the least trace of servility in his disposition. Shawn told me many things, he had a way of telling them peculiarly his own, and he could keep me listening to him hour after hour. His method was agreeably discursive, yet, strange to say, he seemed disinclined to speak on the subject of religion, he rather avoided all reference to creeds, and it was a long time before I knew much or anything of his opinion in this respect. What he mostly told me was useful and entertaining. He never dealt in fairy tales, or in stories about ogerish dwarfs or of savage giants, or in fictions of the supernatural ; and while Nelly Carberry could both amuse and terrify me with dark mysteries, and with her wild myths, and weird phantoms, and could relate all of what ghosts and witches ever said, or did, or could do, and could give me many other evidences of the superstition that clouded her own mind, Shawn Bawn could interest me in a far greater degree, and still present nothing for my amusement, or consideration, or instruction, but—facts.

I was delighted to hear that Shawn was in Cove. He arrived during the time that I and my mother were conversing in the big room, and perhaps prevented further conversation on religious subjects. He had been detained in the city by my father, and subsequently by sickness in his own family. It was a long time since he and I had been separated for such a period, for he had not been with us since I had been taken ill in town. The last time he and I were out together was at the execution of the poor "White Boy" at Gallows Green—a scene that I shall never forget. The moment I heard he was in the house I left my mother and hurried down to meet him, and I think I was never more rejoiced than when I held his knees in my firm embrace and looked up into his honest face with feelings of actual exultation.

"O Shawn, how glad, how glad I am to see you again!"

Young and old addressed him as "Shawn," in fact I could not call him by a more formal name or address him any other way, though he was old enough to be my grandfather ; and he never took it as any mark of disrespect from one so young.

"Well, *alanna*, shure I'm as glad as you are, God knows I am, an' I'm glad to see you look so well ; for the last time I saw you, you were as white as a sheet."

Shawn was of course greatly pleased to be with us again. Without exaggeration I can say that the sound of his voice was then to me the most inspiring music ; and when he spoke to me, as he did at the time, with more than his ordinary affection, he generally commenced by calling me "*alanna*," the Irish, I believe, for "my child."

"O Shawn, I'm so very glad, I wanted to see you so much. I often asked for you, and they always told me that you'd be here soon ; and then, after waiting and waiting, I sometimes thought you'd never come again. But you are here and I'm really so happy ; and now that you're back we must go out together again, we must go out to-morrow and have a long, long walk, and I have so much to tell you, and something that I would not tell to any one else,"—this was a kind of indirect hint at my secret—"and you'll have so much to tell me—won't you ? Ma says I'm sick, but I'll soon get well again—I'm better now, and to-morrow I'll be as strong as ever. O, Shawn, I am so glad ; and the weather is going to be so fine and sunshiny."

It is needless to say that I was in a very happy mood ; rather indeed in a joyous state of excitement. I could have gone on and talked, and talked almost incoherently of what we should do, and where we should go to, without giving him a moment's time for reply. For as he stood before me, patiently listening to my rambling flow of words, his kind old familiar face was lit up by his own peculiar smile, a smile that was then like a

bright lamp which sent long flashing rays far into the future, enabling my fancy to see nothing between the angels of light but little luminous pictures of happiness.

All saw very plainly that Shawn's appearance had already produced a great change in me. I seemed to have got rid of my gloom and languor ; I felt like myself again, and I anticipated getting rid of a burden that had really oppressed me very much ; in fact I already fancied that I had got rid of the most galling part of the load I had carried so long, for the very fact that I knew I now had some one near in whom I could confide was an easement which I felt at once, and I also had the perfect assurance that I might open my mind to the fullest extent to Shawn, and that he was one who would never betray my confidence.

I sat by Shawn while he was eating his supper in the kitchen. I could not keep away from him. My mother was greatly pleased to see me so much better, and, unlike the girls, was no way jealous of my attachment. I scarcely noticed any one else, and kept talking away all the time, while Shawn with the same smile listened to all I had to say. Of course I made inquiries about his wife Peggy, who had been sick ; about his two little boys who helped their mother and worked out every day when they could get anything to do. I asked about my father, and about Mr. Casey ; what tops, or balls, or kites my brother had, and whom he played with after he had come out of school. I told him something about my mother, and Ellen, and little Jane, and about the pleasant walks we had had ; and, again, how I and all of us in the house had longed for his coming. I could have talked all night, or at least I would have been willing to do so, and, though I dared not as yet introduce a certain subject, I introduced any and every other matter I could think of which I thought would be interesting to Shawn.

I had already remained up much later than my usual time. While I spoke I felt that my tongue was beginning to fail ; and the effort to keep my eyes open must have been quite observable. I had been several times urged to retire but felt greatly disinclined to do so. I was loth even then to part with Shawn, but to satisfy me he came with me to my room, and after I had got into my bed I held him by the coat lest he should go away too soon. Comparatively happy as I then was I needed not one of Nelly Carberry's wild stories as a soporific. I tried hard to keep awake ; but the little angels that my mother often told me of must have been near me or over me fluttering their wings, for a soft sound came like the murmur of the summer wind through the leaves ; or was it the distant lulling melody of the same sweet voices that had often brought me slumber before ; or was it Shawn Bawn whispering me away to the land of dreams. My hand at last loosened its grasp ; I knew not that I was left alone. I slept that night better than I had for a long time, and the beautiful scenes that I witnessed during those hours of repose, were such, as I had been told, might be found only within the bright regions of heaven.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONVICT SHIP.

A LITTLE after daylight next morning I awoke quite refreshed, but early as it was my mother rapped at the door while I was dressing. She knew that I would be going out with Shawn after breakfast, and she wanted to speak to me before I saw any one else. She closed the door and said not a word until after she had bent reverently to the little picture of the Virgin that was hung at the head of the bed ; the picture to which she fancied I had recently likened her.

"My dear," said she, "Shawn brought me a letter stating that your pa, and William, and perhaps you aunt, would be here on Saturday evening ; I suppose he told you. I also expected your uncle from Mallow [my mother's brother, the priest], but he wrote to say that he could not come. The Catholic clergy, unlike the clergy of the new faith, have always a great deal to do, and your uncle's duties have lately been very severe. There has been a great deal of sickness among the poor of his parish, and he dares not, and would not leave so long as he was required to administer the last sacraments of the Church to the dying. Our priests are self-sacrificing, they visit the afflicted no matter how infectious or pestilential may be the disease ; in this respect they surpass all others in true apostolic heroism. Anyway while his holy calling obliges him

to witness wretchedness, to become familiar with the most aggravated scenes of distress, and to whisper words of hope and comfort to the faithful in their last moments, he is sure of his grand reward in the last great day. But, my dear child, as he cannot come—for I intended that he should baptize and admit you into the Church of God—there is fortunately another through whom we can obtain the special blessing. Although we can rely on our clergy to the fullest extent in matters of this kind, yet I would prefer some particular friend to prepare you for the baptismal benediction. The rite must be administered with the greatest secrecy. You are aware of the reason why this should be; your father must know nothing of it, and, as I want the ceremony performed to-morrow—the day before he comes—I shall call upon a clergyman with whom I have been intimately acquainted for many years. He has been away in foreign lands—in France and Italy I believe—for a long time, and returned but five or six weeks ago. I have seen him only twice since he came back, but I shall call on him to-day and try and have your baptism take place on Friday (to-morrow evening), we shall have only two or three persons present besides ourselves, and all will be over before your father gets here on Saturday.”

“Very well, ma, as you like. But shall we not have Shawn, and little Jane present, as well as Ellen and yourself. I should like to have them? Shawn and Jane you know—that’s all.”

“Oh yes, Shawn, of course! But, my dear, I have certain reasons for saying that I would prefer not to have Jane present at the ceremony. These reasons I shall likely explain some other time. The baptism must be particularly private. I may as well say at once, that Jane being very young might think it would be a pleasant surprise to tell her mother or her

father that you had become a Catholic, and in a momentary impulse he might, in one of his arguments between himself and your father, retort and say to him, that even his own children were leaving the State Church. No, my dear, it is better not to have Jane present. She of course will be much pleased to find out hereafter that you belong to the Catholic faith, but it will not do at present to let her know anything of it; you must not say a word of it to her on any account. We must be very careful. I have thought the matter over, and it is best to have only Shawn, and Nelly Carberry, besides your sister and myself. All will be over in less than an hour, and then I shall be so happy."

I have to admit that I was greatly disappointed by her refusal to allow little Jane to be one of the witnesses of my admission into the same church of which she was a member. Indeed I had a notion that Jane would be my godmother, and the idea of forming a kind of relationship to her even in this respect, as well as to Shawn, who I thought was to be asked to be my godfather, was very pleasing. But when I was told that I needed no sponsors, that I was now old enough to answer for myself, I became quite indifferent as to my entrance into the new fold. The attraction which my fancy had thrown around the ceremony had already disappeared; and were it not that I felt that it was the earnest desire of my mother to have me kneel at the same altar with her, I should have preferred to remain in my original belief.

My mother soon perceived that I was dissatisfied. She spoke to me in her own gentle way, scarcely upbraiding me for my lukewarmness. But I could not offer the least resistance, and I was soon ready to comply with her wishes. She kissed me and pressed me tenderly to her bosom, and told me that I might tell Shawn of what was to take place and invite him to be with

us. I was of course glad to have this privilege. As the morning was beautiful I felt stronger, and soon became cheerful and in the best of spirits, so after having swallowed a hasty breakfast, Shawn and I left the house together and were once more out and away.

We sat upon an elevated spot beyond the church, from which we had a magnificent view. It was a retired place in the midst of shrubbery and fine old trees, and the sunlit scenery around was very attractive ; the distance having mellowed away much that on closer observation might have been perhaps repulsive. I often noticed that Shawn had the faculty of choosing the best resorts, and to-day we had, I might say, the town and the harbor at our feet—the world, as it were, in miniature. We could see the residences of the wealthy, and the humble homes of the poor ; great warehouses and manufactories ; the business places of merchants, and the shops of traders and mechanics. We could see churches with towering steeples ; gloomy prisons surrounded with massive walls ; the chilling parish poor-house, the last retreat of the unfortunate ; and then beyond was a line of forts to keep enemies at a distance, and perhaps to keep down insurrection at home. There were more vessels in the harbor than I think I had ever seen before. Some had but just arrived and were furling sails, or letting go anchors, others were preparing for their long voyage, while the long line of smoke from great steam-ships about to leave port seemed to darken the air ; numerous small boats were flitting to and fro, and there appeared to be an unusual bustle and hurry on shore.

As we looked seaward we could mark the shadow of spreading canvas gliding upon the waves ; and far, far out, what might be taken to be but foam, or spray, or mere specks of light, would now and then disappear from view, as if Old Ocean had allured the daring, confident mariner beyond a certain

boundary, and then, seizing on its lawful prize, engulfed both him and his venture.

"That's a big ship down there, Shawn. People are coming and going, and a good many are remaining on board. See! there's one sailing out, and people on the deck are waving handkerchiefs, and those in the boats close by are doing the same. There must be a great number—how small they appear from here! And look! there's one, two, three other ships of the same kind; they are busy taking boxes and things on board, and I think I can see women and children, as well as men, on every one of them."

"Yes child," said Shawn, "Those is what they calls emygrunt vessels. They're takin' thim poor craythurs aboard, that couldn't live at home here in Ireland, away to furrin countries. Och, God help thim! They had hardship here, and there's lots o' hardship afore 'em. There's husban's, an' wives, an' fathers, an' sons, an' mothers, an' daughters, an' ould, ould friends, partin' there afore us that 'ill niver meet again. Isn't it hard for thim to leave the ould land, an' the ould fireside, and to drop the last tear on the grave in the ould churchyard? Och fareer garish!*" Many have gone a'ready, an' more 'ill follow, but few 'ill iver come back."

Shawn was in one of his usual reflective moods, there was an air of sadness in his words, and, while in this state, he sometimes used exclamations in Irish which probably had a deeper meaning for himself.

"What are all those people in that other large ship for, Shawn? What a crowd!—and they're all in red like soldiers."

"Yis, thim is all sojers—every one. That's what they calls a throop-ship. They're takin' thim poor fellows off to furrin

* Bitter misfortune.

lands, maybe to fight an' kill other sojers that they niver had a quarrel wid; or maybe to fight wid a worse inimy—the fever or the pistilence—that has brought many a strong man low down. Och, there's civilization for you, as they calls it! They're takin' 'em off, an' the plough an' the spade may rust, an' the land be untilled, maybe, that they may do the work of the tyrant in some other field. Oyea, what a way to delude men to death's doore wid flags flyin', an' dhrums beatin', an' music playin'—hidin' the skull an' cross bones—until they walk into the very grave! An' thin the more bloody it is, the more glory, as they calls it, the dead sojer has. Oh, *mille gloria!* if the grave is the poor sojer's glory they'll hav' 'em in plinty; for graves they're sure to find, but not among these ould hills; but their bones will be scattered here an' there upon other hills, an' the raven, an' the vulture, will pick 'em clane."

I had always heard Shawn denounce war in his own way; he thought it a great iniquity. He looked upon soldiers as he would upon slaves; and I feel almost certain that if he met a recruiting sergeant displaying ribbons and bright shillings, he would warn the tempted peasant, or poor laborer, to beware of the treacherous man-trap then in his way. Recruits would not have been very numerous if Shawn could have prevented it.

"Well, there's another vessel off alone at a distance near that fort; there is no other ship near it. See, some of them on board are dressed in red, but the most of them in a kind of gray. The sailors are now letting down the sails, and the vessel begins to move on its way out, but I see no one near in boats or on shore to wave an adieu. None but the sailors are stirring on deck. The other people, the passengers I suppose—perhaps they are invalids—keep unusually still. Can that be an hospital-ship?"

Shawn seemed to be thinking for a few moments before he made a reply.

"Yis, you might well call it a hospital-ship—that's the right name for it after all. Thim in red is the guards, an' thim in gray (men, an' God help us! women too), is every one of 'em sick an' diseased, an' afflicted so bad as not to be fit to live among others—physic will niver cure 'em. They're all outcasts,—lepers—yes lepers—that's it. The judge an' the jury, an' the whole coorts have said so, an' the law says that many of 'em are even dead a'ready; an' now they're takin' 'em away, away to a distant land to bury 'em forever. Wisha, many of 'em wouldn't care to be buried at once in the deep say! Some of 'em is so bad that they'll niver get well; some of 'em will weep day an' night, an' night an' day, an' wrinkles an' gray hairs will come long afore their time; an' some whose hearts is stony an' dead, don't care what comes an' will niver shed another tear. Och, wirra, wirra, the shadow of misfortune is over some from their very cradles!"

"Poor people! I'm very sorry for them, Shawn. I suppose some of them would do better and be very good if they had a chance?"

"Little chance for thim now, *alanna*! Few will pity an' none will pardon, an' none will offer to make crutches for broken laws. But from the time that most of those poor convicts was childer, what have they learnt but evil? Too many of 'em born to misery, without house or home, without a sure meal or sufficient rags to cover them; only too often seein' the rich who had nearly all to themselves, still plundering the poor, an' the poor gettin' still poorer. Naythur judge nor jury took their timplations into account, though bringin' 'em madness or despair. Want of work, an' hunger, an' maybe the dhrink, has left most o' them where they are. Yet there's some among them who never

stole a turnip or a loaf o' bread, or struck down an oppressor, but they cried out against bad laws, an' bad laws called thim rebels an' made thim felons as corrupt as the rest ; an' they're all there thrown together in a heap one to infect the other. They'll go out on the ocean away from here without hearing a single farewell ; they'll be no one near to lift a hand to say goodbye, or God bless you ; for most of those you see are in chains an' fetters ; and that's a convict-ship about to sail away, with its cargo of sin an' sorrow."

We remained silent for some time until the black prison-ship had drifted out of the harbor. It seemed to lessen its distance from the shore with a kind of funereal motion, as if reluctant to depart. Shawn's reflections at the time must have been like my own. His face was hidden in his hands as if disinclined to look any longer at the distant object. Though I was very young I could not help meditating on his words and commiserating my fellow creatures who were under sentence of banishment. I pitied them from my heart. And as I saw them on their lonely way, apparently without a single relative or friend to watch their departure, with a heaving bosom, I jumped up, and standing by Shawn's side, I kept waving my cap until my arm grew tired. Perhaps that little friendly signal was never seen by any one of those for whom it was intended, or, it might be, that some tearful eye, turned towards heaven for comfort, had caught its faint shadow in the clear air, and, like the dim, distant wing of the dove hovering over the ark upon the bleak waters, it might have brought the first germ of hope to some poor castaway of misfortune.

But now they were getting far out upon the waves, and houses, and rocks, and trees, and many old familiar land marks must have already disappeared. Though the sunlight could still be seen on the fluttering sails of the vessel, I could not

avoid thinking that there were shadows around many of the poor fluttering hearts then borne away ; and that many eyes dimmed with tears of sorrow and repentance as they looked, it might be for the last time, upon the fading land of their birth.





CHAPTER IX.

AN EXPLANATION, AND A RELIEF.

AFTER we had sat for a time longer in silence I thought it was best to say something to Shawn about that which concerned me so much. We were alone, as I had so often wished to be, and I now had with me the only friend to whom I could freely speak of that which had for some time been so oppressive. Yet strange to say I had already begun to hesitate. I had been actually deliberating whether it was better to keep my secret a little longer and wait until some special occasion should draw it forth without any needed effort on my part. We often wish for opportunities, but frequently when they come unexpectedly or after long seeking, we feel disinclined to take advantage of the desired chance; we procrastinate, and the opportunity is let slip, it is lost for the time, and too often lost perhaps for ever. I thought of this at the moment, but still my resolution began to flag. I knew that whatever Shawn told me would be the truth, and I feared that his explanation should be such as to make me discontented or unhappy for years. Would it be wisdom to seek for information that could do me no good, or for knowledge that would perhaps only reveal a past weakness of one to whom I owed so much. How often do we close our eyes, and stop our ears, and turn away, lest we should see or hear, or discover anything that might exhibit a blemish or imperfection

in the idol of the heart. Were it not that I loved my mother so well I could have been more indifferent as to what Shawn possibly had to reveal, but I was afraid that in explaining my mystery he would have to say something detracting to the brightness and purity which I fancied belonged to her alone.

As it was I had never heard much, in fact scarcely anything, of my mother's early history. Indeed it had never occurred to me to make the least inquiry concerning her. I thought, as most other boys think, that *my* mother was the most amiable, the most beautiful, and the most virtuous woman living. She had no doubt been a pretty, innocent girl, with blushing cheeks and long brown curls, fond of dolls and little pets like other children. She had, I believed, been for a time at a fashionable boarding school, and had learned a little French, got to know something of German, and knew something of philosophy; had become skilled to a very passable extent in music; could play waltzes and operatic pieces on the piano, and could sing well, with rare expression and exquisite feeling. Much care had evidently been taken with her religious education; and, better than all, she had acquired a good knowledge of her own language, and of several important matters which had become useful in after life. And then, when she had grown up to be a beautiful young lady, she had no doubt fascinated my father, and he, like a sensible man, had made her his wife.

This was the inclination of my ideas concerning my mother before I had discovered the portrait. Perplexed and tormented as I afterwards was, I tried to account for her being clothed in a nun's dress, or what appeared to be such. She must, I thought, have been partly educated in a convent, and the rules of the institution perhaps required that a garb of this kind should be worn by lady boarders under tuition. She had probably been religiously romantic, like many other young ladies, and antici-

pating conventual life, had donned the sombre habit of a recluse in order to have her portrait taken as one of the pious sisterhood. But why should she have already anticipated the forlornness and hopelessness of those who foolishly leave the sweetest comforts and blessings of life, by wearing that sad expression ; for the face of the portrait was sadness itself. I tried to account for these, but, after all, every ingenious supposition was unsatisfactory. And then, again, why was it that that ghost or spectre-priest, or whatever he was, took such an interest in her ? Why was it that he had gazed so intently at the mute face ? Why had he kissed the portrait, and sighed and wept like any living mortal in the agonies of despair ? There was something in this which I could not understand, and it was the explanation of that something which I now almost dreaded.

In this extremity I thought it best to introduce another subject, so that after having discussed that, our speech could flow on, and ripple as it were around the rock which seemed to obstruct further progress,—“Shawn, what are you ?”

“What am I,” returned he, with the least look of surprise ; “Well, child, only a poor, ignorant man.”

“Oh no, you are not. But that’s not what I mean. What religion are you ?”

“What religion ? Musha,” replied he, after a pause, “I suppose I’m something like the rest—yes, I suppose so.”

“Of course you are, Shawn. Wern’t you born and baptized a Catholic ?”

“Faith, maybe I was, an’ maybe I wasn’t,” said he reflectively. “But what do I know about it, alanna ?—’twould be hard for me to tell.”

“Well, you know every one must belong to some religion, Shawn, ’ma says so ; and she says that you are a Catholic, because you were baptized a Catholic.”

"Och shure, av I was baptized a Turk that wouldn't make me one, av I didn't believe in the Turks. An' I don't know yet what religion manes or what's the use av id unless to keep a body fightin' and disputin' about nothin' or about somethin' that nobody knows anythin' about."

"But, Shawn, I can tell you what religion means. It means—it means—it means—that we're all very wicked, you know."

Really, I was puzzled myself at the moment to tell what it did mean ; but this was the best impromptu explanation I could give.

"Oh, av coorse, wicked enough I suppose, an' there's plinty o' room in us all for improvement ; I know that. Yes, child maybe we're all very wicked," continued Shawn very slowly, "but the wickedest people I know av, is thim that is bothered wid so much religion ; an' faith I think, from what I've seen, the less a body has av it the better for all sides. They say it's the only thing to save the sowl. Wisha maybe it is, av there's a sowl to save, but while it's been dooin' that, it's often an' often dhruven the heart clane out av minny a man, an' made him a Turk and a savage to thim that hev inny other kind av religion than his own."

"Indeed, I don't know, Shawn," said I, still puzzled ; but ma says that unless we have religion we cannot get to heaven ; and that there is but one true Church, and that is the Catholic Church. She says that pa, and William, and I are Protestants—am I a Protestant, Shawn ?"

"Av coorse you are, *avick* ; but you should know best. Iv christenin' made you one, you were christened, fur I saw thim doin' it. There was yer father, an' yer Aunt Kitty, an' a man wid a book, an' a bowl o' wather. They said you was goin' to die, an' when they flung that over you, *och monom* ! — you

didn't exactly spake out, you said what you could loud enough in yer own way to make 'em believe that there was more life in you than they expected at inny rate—Oyea! I'm sure I'll remimber that screech av yours fur minny a long day yit."

"Now Shawn," said I, rather confidentially, "I want to tell you something. Ma says I don't belong to the true Church, and that I can't be saved unless I do. And O, Shawn, you don't know how she frets, and prays, and cries for me on that account. She says that if I died now, that I could not go to heaven, and that she could not even pray for my soul. She wants me now to be baptized again, and to be a Catholic like herself."

Shawn looked at me for a moment or two with a scrutinizing eye,—“She wants you to be baptized, avick, does she?” and then he added rather emphatically, “an’ what would yer father think o’ that, child?”

“I’m sure I don’t know, Shawn,” replied I, in a hesitating way; “but ma says I must not tell—only, you know, I may tell you.”

As Shawn sat by me he clasped his knees and looked more thoughtful than before. After having remained silent for nearly a minute he spoke with unusual calmness, and said, “Well, *alanna*, yer mother is a good woman—one av the best; an’ her advice is good, and she wouldn’t willingly desave; but she’s desavin’ yer father now—the only way she would iver desave him—an’ she’s givin’ you advice that he wouldn’t give you—an’ she knows that—an’, after all, she thinks she’s right in desavin’. There its for you! Och, *avick machree*, this is only another proof fur me av what religion can do wid blind, blind believers! Her intention is good, but she’s even desavin’ herself, an’ her religion makes her think there’s no harm in doin’ a little wrong fur your sake—a wrong that yer father might niver forget or niver forgive.”

Indeed from Shawn's very impressive remarks I had begun to think that this matter of re-baptism was something which would possibly be more serious in its consequences to us all than I had allowed myself to imagine. I was, above all things willing to gratify my mother; but what if my compliance resulted in causing a serious disagreement between my parents? Still I could not look at the matter in so grave a light as Shawn seemed to view it, and I thought I should make a plea for her motives.

"But perhaps she is right, Shawn, after all. She knows what is best for me surely; and I'd be willing to do anything to please her. If I were baptized ever so often I don't think it would make me change my mind a bit; and pa need not know anything about it. I don't think that religion would cause me to do anything which she really thought to be wrong."

"No, child, av there was innys rale good in it, it oughn't. But wirra, wirra, what strife an' misery, an' misfortune it has brought here around us in ivery town an' county all through this country as long as I kin remember! No doubt yer mother thinks she's right, an' she wants to do what she thinks is best fur you; but shure yer father is a judge av sich things too, an' *his* religion makes him think the other way. Lor' save us! what wont religion make min an' wimin do. Shure I've seen it ivir since I was a little gossoon."

It seemed to me that Shawn had singular ideas about religion, but much as I thought of his opinion on nearly all other matters, I of course preferred to believe that my mother was right, and that I ought to comply with her request. I was also under the impression that in course of time—perhaps before my change of creed had reached his ears—that my father would think as she did, and that we would all be Catholics. Besides, was not my mother most exemplary—kind, and good, and

amiable in every respect, simply because she was all the time so religious ; while my father, who never exhibited much piety, was hasty, and was, according to my immature judgment, only religious when he was arguing with his partner, Mr. Casey, or, while in angry mood, telling my mother that the Pope was the "man of sin."

"Shawn," said I at last, "I don't know much about these things, and I fear I'm not soon going to be much the wiser. It's no matter to me what religion I am, its all the same, only that I would like to please ma'. She said I might tell you, and so I have, and I now want you, and she wants you, to come with us to-morrow and see me baptized a Catholic. We want you to be present. I thought to have you for a god-father, but ma says that I'm old enough to answer for myself and that I won't want one now ; any way you must be there, Shawn."

"Well, child," said Shawn, "you know that I'd do a good deal, almost anythin', fur you or yer mother—you know I'd go far to sarve you both, I'd travel miles an' miles, an' suffer hunger and thirst, an' hate, an' cowl'd, av id would do ye any good—but I can't do that. I saw you christened once, an' I don't want to see it agin. No, no ; how could I look up in yer father's face—the man that would thrust me a'most with his life—after doin' that. No, *avick*, all the goold in airth, an' all the pearls and diamonds in the bottom o' the say, wouldn't tempt me to desave him that far—an' I niver could—an' I won't."

I must admit that I was rather taken aback by Shawn's determined refusal ; for he must have had powerful reasons of his own to keep him from being with us. I felt at once that it would be useless to try and prevail on him to be a witness of my new baptism. Besides, I had sense enough to see that it would be placing him in a false position with my father,

who had such implicit confidence in his integrity. I also felt that my mother would be disappointed, but that she would be generous enough to make allowance for his honest scruples, and would not renew the request. At any rate, I knew that she could rely upon his keeping the matter secret, and that come what would, no matter how serious the event might prove for her domestic happiness, no matter if every earthly hope of success depended on the result, she would never rest content until I was made a member of the True Church and enrolled among the faithful. Turning to Shawn again I said, "I know that ma' would not ask you to do anything that she thought was not right. She thought it would be no harm for you to be present, that you as a Catholic would be rather pleased and would not object, but as you won't come be sure for her sake and never say a word to pa' about it."

"Take care of that yourself, child," said Shawn impressively, "take care of that. If he hears of it, it might be a day of sorrow for your poor mother."

Shawn remained silent for a time as if in deep thought, and then he slowly added, "There'll be throuble in this yit. Sooner or later 'twill be known—and thin——"

He did not finish the sentence, but his suppression of perhaps ominous words which were upon his tongue left a very disagreeable impression on my mind, and to rid myself of this I commenced at once,

"Shawn, did you ever see a ghost?"

"A ghost?" replied he, turning to look at me with some surprise at such a question, "a ghost, alanna? Arrah which kind av a ghost?"

"Oh, a regular ghost—a real dead ghost, you know."

"A dead ghost?" said he with a kind of incredulous smile, "well, maybe I did, and maybe I didn't. I've seen miny a live

one. Shure there's plinty livin' now that is only their own ghosts—the ghosts av what they once was. Did you iver see one, avick?"

"Really I don't know, but I think I saw something very like one."

"P'raps 'twas one av Nelly Carberry's ghosts. She has 'em you know at her finger inds; inny way on the tip of her tongue."

"I know she has, Shawn. If I only believed half what she told me about them I could fancy that spirits were behind us, and before us, and all around about us, and that the very air was filled with them. Oh, such frightful stories as she used to tell me! Many an hour I lay in bed trembling when I ought to have been asleep; and then when I slept they came to me in my dreams."

"Inny way, 'tis well you don't b'lieve half she towld you. Av you doubt half, you may soon doubt the whole. To be able to doubt at all where so miny b'lieve is no bad sign; fur doubt is the first step out av delusion. Av there's ghosts in the air let 'em stay there, that's the right place for 'em, an' thim that's always a dhreamin' about 'em is the most likely to come across sich shadows in their dhrames; an' faith it's my opinion they'll niver be seen inny where else."

"But, Shawn, there must be spirits. I don't care so much for what Nelly says, but ma tells me that dead people can come back, and so does my aunt, and so does everybody. Ma says there was a time when the dead got up from their graves and walked about so that they could be seen; and my aunt once read for me how the witch of Endor raised Samuel from his tomb, and she told me that religion teaches many such things."

"So it does, so it does, but yit it may not be all ixactly throe. There's plinty even doubts religion itself. One b'lieves

one thing, an' another b'lieves another. Some b'lieves in Luther, an' some in the Pope, an' some in nothin' at all. Some won't b'lieve in hell, some won't b'lieve in purgatory, some won't b'lieve in sayin' a prayer, an' some says that you may b'lieve as much as you like an' yit not be able to raise the dead, or to walk upon wather—barrin' 'twas well frozen, or to—wisha, the Lord knows what, fur I don't. Av there's anything to bewildher a poor craythur in this world or anywhere else, shure its religion ; an' what an uproar there's about it intirely, an' what scribblin' and debatin' an' fightin' there's among the whole av 'em, clargy an' all, about their popes an' their bishops, an' their churches, an' their angels an' saints, and their ghosts, an' their witches—musha you might as well b'lieve all that Nelly Carberry tells you at wance, fur maybe she has as good grounds fur b'lievin' all that she b'lieves as they have."

"If she saw what I saw, Shawn, I'm sure she'd always believe in real ghosts."

"What did you see, then? Tell us what it was."

"Well, I saw a priest or a spirit when I was in bed up in the big room. I saw him more than once. I saw him two different nights."

"Did you see him when you wur asleep? Was it in your dhrame you saw him? P'raps 'twas the ghost uv the dead priest that I took you to see long ago in the big church in town."

"No, Shawn," said I, remembering the circumstance ; "that priest was lying dead in his coffin with wax candles burning around him, in the middle of the noon-day, and there were people looking at him and crying ; but the one I saw in the big room came in the middle of the night, he stood in the moonlight and he was looking at something, and crying himself."

"An' you saw that more'n wance?" inquired Shawn; "an' are you shure that you wur not asleep?"

"As sure as that I'm not asleep now. When I saw it the first time I told them all about it in the house, but after a while they said it was a deception—my ma said so too; but when I saw it again plainer than ever I kept it to myself with what I afterwards found; and, O Shawn, how I longed for you to come so that I could tell you about it, for keeping it so long to myself made me quite sick."

He turned and looked at me closely. I was perfectly calm, and I perceived that he was prepared to place some reliance on my story. In a few minutes I told him of what I had seen, how I was frightened the first time I had seen the apparition, and almost terrified the next time. I described the priest—slight in form, having a tonsure, past the middle age, and wearing a soutaine; of how he had sighed and wept while looking at something which he held in his hand; of his sudden exit when Nelly Carberry came to the door, and finally of my search and discovery the next day, and of the anxiety which, since that time, was to me so distressing.

Shawn sat in deep cogitation—my tale had evidently set him thinking, for he was plainly impressed with the truth of what I had stated. At last he said:

"That was no dead ghost you saw. I think I've seen that priest's face myself; aye more'n wance or twice or a dozen times; an' I think I know how he got in an' how he went out."

I now nervously drew forth the little portrait. "There, Shawn," said I, "is what I have discovered." And I think my voice must have trembled a little when I asked him in a subdued tone, "Can you tell me whose face that is?"

He gazed at it for a few moments, then he looked inquiringly

at me. "I know it, alanna," said he in his tenderest manner, an' I now see why it troubled you so much. But its not her's," (he must have read my very thoughts), "its the picthur uv one that's gone—'tis not her's, alanna. That's the face uv yer mother's sister that died afore you was born."





CHAPTER X.

AN UNSAFE GUIDE.

MY mother was delighted when we got home that evening to see that I was so much improved. My mind had certainly been greatly relieved in one respect, and I returned her embrace with a more impulsive feeling than ordinary. I felt once more that she was all that a mother could be, and that if it were possible to increase my love for her I should do so in order to compensate, or atone, for any doubt that I had even for a moment ever allowed myself to entertain as to her goodness or purity. Of course she made inquiries as to where we had been, and I told her that we had sat on the hill for some time watching the ships coming in and going out, and that we had visited two or three other pleasant places, and that, as of old, I had enjoyed Shawn's conversation and society very much. I was careful, however, to give no hint relating to the subject which had been the most engrossing, and I thought it best to delay a little longer saying anything as to Shawn's refusal to be present at the ceremony of my baptism on the next day.

They had been busy in the house during our absence. My father, and brother, and other visitors were expected on Saturday, and a great deal of cleaning up, and polishing, and putting things in order had been done. The girls had gone out early

in the day, and only Ellen had returned. I was disappointed to learn that little Jane would not be back perhaps for a day or two, anyway not before the arrival of our expected visitors. She had been pressed to remain with a lady who resided a mile or so distant from our place, and as my sister had been made aware of the necessity for Jane's absence, she induced her to stay away until house-cleaning was over—this I suppose was the excuse—and that she and I should call for her probably before Sunday.

After tea my mother took me with her on a tour of inspection. Every room had been overhauled and put in extra order, and mine in particular had a few extra pictures and decorations. The pictures were mostly of saints in various pious attitudes, placed there one might fancy so that I could receive their mute congratulations, and that they could watch over and protect me after I had received due admission into the fold, and become a member of the holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. A feeling akin to that which would induce my mother to decorate my sister's chamber were she about to become a bride, had in all probability led her to make these little extra additions to my room—they had been placed there by her own hand—for was I not already on the eve of my espousal of the True Faith? Anyway she was quite safe in doing so, as it was not at all likely that my father when he came would look into my apartment. Even if he did, he would scarcely notice what had been done, or object to the pictures; for rigid as he sometimes was in his own religious feelings, he never that I knew of objected to my mother having such emblems of devotion in her own room, or would never allude in an offensive way to her church or its peculiar discipline, unless angered by religious debate, or something else.

We had been nearly all over the house before we entered

the big room. I had scarcely put my foot inside the door before I was startled by the gloomy appearance of the apartment. Though the evening was far advanced, and the shadows deepening around, it was yet sufficiently light to permit the deep red blush to be seen still lingering on the hills, as if the fading day was reluctant to depart, or yield to the approaching solemnity of night. But the room was gloom itself. The window-blinds were closely drawn, the air was almost chilly, and a feeling of sadness seemed to take possession of us as we stood there alone. I held my mother's hand, she seemed to be in a very serious mood, and as I looked towards the recess, I was almost startled again when I discovered that it was draped in black, that a small altar covered with the same melancholy color had been erected where an altar had stood years before; the edges of the dark altar-cloth being trimmed or bound with a white band, forming a contrast which made you think at once of death. On the back centre of the altar there was a silver crucifix, on each side of this there were three long silver candlesticks, and there were other articles thereon suitable and necessary for religious purposes.

Though the eye is generally attracted by brightness, yet there are times when the vision has an unnatural inclination towards gloom. When the heart is full of joy its effulgence is seen in the countenance, and the eye will delight in brilliancy, but when all is clouded with sadness, and when hope no longer dwells in the breast, then dazzling light seems but a mockery, and we turn away to seek in the shade for something more in correspondence with our own sombre feelings.

As it was, I was already sufficiently depressed to look upon the altar and its surroundings with a kind of complacency. There was a suitability in them with the emotions which influenced me at the moment, and which soon subsided into a calm solemnity.

We stood looking at the apparently funereal arrangements that had been made. What could these mean? My mother remained silent. I looked up and her eyes were sad and down-cast. Her thoughts were most likely with the past, and memory was perhaps busy bringing back to view incidents connected with some life which had been blotted out from the firmament of existence, but which had left, it might be, the shadow of its cares, its sorrows, or its misfortunes to return annually in the circuit of her years; and that its spreading gloom had already reached her. I felt no inclination to disturb her; my thoughts were no doubt flowing along the same current as her own. At last she said:

"John, you are no doubt surprised at what you see, but I will tell you the reason of this." She gave a deep sigh and then there was another pause. "To-morrow my dear will be the twelfth anniversary of poor Aunt Mary's death, and at the particular request of a friend of hers, as well as to gratify a strong desire of my own, we are going to have a mass for the repose of her soul celebrated here in the morning. You will attend, and immediately afterwards your baptism shall take place. We had the altar erected here to-day; the clergyman who is to officiate assisted us, it can easily be removed again, and the room will appear as usual."

She seemed to be deeply interested in this matter, which she appeared to consider as one of the greatest importance; and as her allusion to my baptism reminded me of Shawn's objection to be present, I thought that this was as good an opportunity as I could have to tell her of it. My mother noticed that I appeared disinclined to remain any longer in the room. It was growing dark, and I somehow preferred at the time to be in any other place. Before we left the room she bent her head and muttered a prayer and then devoutly crossed herself. We went

out, and when she locked the door we stood together looking from a back window from which we could see the garden. It was almost night, one or two little stars could be dimly seen, and my mother appeared to watch one of these as if it were a celestial oasis, a momentary resting-place for her thoughts while on their way to penetrate further into the great desert-like futurity far, far beyond. No doubt she had just been dwelling sadly on the past, and an excursion towards the realms of hope would give her a fairer and more encouraging aspect of human existence.

"Ma," said I, "see, there is Shawn pacing up and down that walk in the garden. How glad I am that he is with us again. I don't know what we should do without him."

I often noticed that at times Shawn had a great desire to be alone, particularly about eventide. He would then become reflective, and his mental commentaries on human affairs, and his thoughts on his own peculiar position, and on that of others in a like condition, would, I often fancied, if written out, and printed, and read, afford rich suggestions for the philosophical optimists, or pessimists, who are in deep speculation as to whether things might be worse or better than they now are; and would also furnish rare texts for the comfortable clergy who preach that content with our lot—no matter how wretched—and with the seeming disposition of human affairs by Providence, is the duty of all.

"Shawn is a wonderful man," said my mother, returning from her astral excursion, "a faithful creature, one of the best, who, if I am not greatly mistaken, would have made his mark in the world if he had only been educated. There is as much good in Shawn as in any man I ever knew; I have tried him a hundred times and have never yet been once deceived."

"I think he knows more than any other man, except pa; and

I'm sure he knows nearly as much about many things as pa does. But, ma, Shawn tells me there is one thing he knows nothing about, and that's religion ; he told me many a time that he doesn't really know the use of it."

"I am sorry for that, my dear," said my mother, a little surprised. "Without religious information, and religious influences, all other knowledge would be of little or no service in the long run ; it would I fear be only too often a drawback. However, I have seldom spoken to Shawn on the subject ; like most others he has scarcely given the matter any consideration. I only know that he is a Catholic, which is a great thing for him, yet I fear that he is very remiss in his duties as a Christian—very careless, like too many. It won't be always so I hope. Religion affords the greatest comfort to the poor."

"Shawn will never be religious, ma ; I know he won't from what he says ; that is, he doesn't care for going to the chapel or to mass. But he's religious in other ways ; for I know he is very charitable. I have often seen him give halfpence to the poor when he had only few halfpence for himself. Isn't that the best kind of religion, ma ? Shawn says it is."

"Then he's deceived, my dear," said my mother with a little warmth. "Unless he hears the Church, his charity is good for nothing. People round about us that don't belong to the true faith are charitable, and the heathens are charitable, but good works, to be accounted worthy in the sight of Heaven, must flow through the true Church ; none others can be acceptable, they will profit him or them nothing."

I must admit that this theory which my mother tried to make impressive, was rather in conflict with my sense of natural justice ; but I tried to persuade myself that she knew best, and was right ; still I would have had much difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Shawn was wrong. Anyway, I

could make nothing of it ; the matter was so perplexing, or so profound, that it left me entirely beyond my depth.

" But why was Shawn left so ignorant one way, ma?" said I, quite incapable of discussing the subject of natural goodness. " Why wasn't he taught to read and write as I have been ? Whose fault was that ? It wasn't his, for I am sure nothing has troubled him so much as not to be able to read a book. He is always glad to have me or anyone else read to him—my aunt reads the Bible for him whenever she comes—and he told me many a time that there were plenty left like him, and that he was more ashamed of his ignorance than of his poverty. He has often and often said that there was too much religion in the world, and too little useful knowledge and common sense. I don't think Shawn is a Catholic, ma ; he's nothing."

" He was baptized a Catholic, my dear, and that's enough for one like him. The Almighty will overlook his ignorance. Want of education is no fault of his. Indeed I can't say who is to blame. I suppose his parents were too poor to send him to school ; besides I suppose he has had to work for a living ever since he was a little boy. But better for him to be an humble Catholic not able to tell one letter from another, than to be a learned professor, yet a despiser of the true faith. Bible reading will do him no good."

" Poor Shawn !" said I. " What a pity ! He would have been such a fine scholar if he could only read and had plenty of books ; he would be so pleased to be able to teach others, particularly poor people. He knows a good deal as it is, for he told me ever so many things that I did not know before, and he has such a way of finding out things. I would have taught him to spell and read, but he says that its too late now, and he always wants me to read to him instead ; he will listen to any one. When my Aunt Kitty comes she always brings

her little Bible and she reads that for him, and would for Nelly Carberry, too, if she would listen."

"Nelly is like myself," said my mother, "she would rather read her prayer book. Long ago your aunt used to bring me tracts, and Protestant publications, but it was of no use, my conscience forbade me to look at them; 'twould be better for Shawn if he had never heard a text from your aunt's Bible."

"He has a wonderful memory and remembers almost everything told him. My pa once said to him that he would make a great naturalist, that is, I suppose, one fond of making discoveries. Once, when Shawn and I were up on the top of a very high hill, he broke a stone, and showed me shells, like little cockle shells, in it; and there were bits of broken claws like shrimp's claws, and what looked like the ribs and bones of little fish there also, and he asked me how these came to be in the stone. At first I said I didn't know, but then I remembered what I heard pa once say, and I told him that I supposed they were brought there somehow at the time of the great deluge. But Shawn only smiled at this explanation, for he said there never was such a thing or could be such a thing as a flood sufficient to cover the whole earth at one time, and that it was no more to be believed than that God had once come down to confuse the workmen lest they should build the tower of Babel as high as Heaven itself. Oh I can't remember the number of things he told me. No matter where he goes he is always finding out something. But, ma, I'm quite certain he is not a Catholic or anything else; for he told me he did not believe in baptism; that if he was baptized a Turk that that would not make him one. No, no; Shawn is nothing."

I perceived at once that my mother seemed very much surprised at what I told her as to Shawn's opinion on religious subjects; and she also appeared greatly concerned as to the

effect such teaching might have on me ; her mind was evidently troubled.

"Well, child," said she, speaking deliberately after having remained thoughtful for some time, "if I had had the least idea that Shawn could possibly revile religion in your presence I should soon have put a stop to it. If I had known anything of this before, I would not have allowed you to hear so much from the lips of a man whose remarks or whose teaching might have turned you aside from all truth. You have been in great danger child. Instruction like that, if I dare call it instruction, has led many to doubt, and then to perdition. I am amazed to hear so much against one in whom I trusted so much. I thought you had a safe, innocent guide and companion in Shawn. Alas, poor man ! who has been so prudent and sensible in so many other ways. Oh, my dear child, how sorry I am for this ! How has it escaped me so long ? I never doubted him, I never dreamt that an old and tried servant like Shawn should ever lose my confidence, or that I should dread, as I do now, to have him under the same roof with my child. What misery it might have brought me ! My duty is plain, but oh how painful ! What a cross I shall be forced to take up ! I would frame some excuse if Shawn had stolen my purse. If he should plead, as too many have had to plead, the temptation of terrible want, I could forgive all. But how can we overlook a resolute departure from truth ? Poor man, poor man, who could have expected this from Shawn ?"

My mother was very much affected ; her feelings for and against our faithful old servant were in sad conflict at the moment ; as for mine they were indescribable. The very idea of Shawn being under such a load of censure, and the chance of my being separated from him was almost overwhelming.

"Yes, John," continued my mother, "my duty is plain. I

must tell your father, and we must protect you from the contamination of untruths against religion more carefully than we should try to protect you were you exposed to the contagion of some dreadful bodily disorder. The evils are not to be compared. Poor man ! it is sad to think that after so many years we have now to avoid him ; how distressing to think of it ! But, child, these are degenerate days ; the mockery of almost everything sacred seems to be on the lips of all. The proud man would deny the existence of God ; the man of wealth is defiant of Providence. The mechanic is flippant with arguments against religion ; even the laborer in the field can repeat conflicting texts. I have heard of all this. The beggar on the highway, the ballad singer in the streets, street vendors and hucksters, and the very school boys as they shout and scuffle, have something pert and disrespectful to say against our churches and our priests, against creeds and doctrines, even against religion itself. Oh, my dear, how the times are changed, how opinion has varied ! Naked skepticism is stalking through the land, and I must shield you from its dread approach. God forbid that you should ever become a mocker of that which is most sacred ! Alas, poor Shawn ! Your humble poverty, your want of learning, and your ignorance of many things, might have been blessings in disguise, but the knowledge of evil which the serpent has stealthily brought you may be your eternal ruin. Poor, poor Shawn !”

My mother sighed heavily and remained silent for a few moments, while I, with commingled feelings of regret, of sorrow, and of fear, was unable to say a word in defence of one for whom at the moment I felt quite willing to die. My heart felt as if ready to burst.

“But urgent, however, as this matter is,” resumed my mother, “and strict and plain as my duty must be, I shall do nothing

hastily, I must see Shawn myself. You are young and may possibly have misunderstood him. I shall question him closely, and his replies shall determine whether I shall speak to your father about it or not. Though he and I unfortunately differ widely yet as to points of faith and doctrine, still he, and I, and those of every creed from Quakers to the wildest Methodists ; from the advocates of the blackest Protestantism to the faithful of our own Church, are all prompt to unite in a denunciation of unbelief. I know your father well ; ready as he is to stigmatize the Holy Church of Rome in his angry moments, he will even in his most calm and reasonable mood be more intolerant towards skepticism than I could ever be. Yes, I shall first speak to Shawn ; and if I find that his once pure and simple mind has become polluted, then my course is clear. Painful as the duty may be as far as relates to him, and to you, and to us all, you and he must be separated forever ; or perhaps at least for years until you are old enough and sufficiently grounded and instructed in religious knowledge to be able to refute the sophistical arguments of any scoffer you may chance to meet. As it is, Shawn must not be present to witness your baptism to-morrow, we shall be better without him."

If I had ever seen my dear mother in a perturbed state it must have been at that particular time. Were it any other woman I should say that she was in an unamiable mood ; and then afterwards when I told her that Shawn had already refused to be present at the ceremony of my admission into the Church of Rome, her agitation seemed to increase, and her resolution to become more determined. I soon perceived this, and I felt very sorry for having mentioned anything of Shawn's refusal ; but my regret was of little avail. The color in her cheek heightened, and for a few moments she appeared to be flushed with indignation ; but it was only for a few moments. Presently

she grew calmer, her wonted placid manner returned, a shade of sadness passed over her face, and I knew that her sorrow for Shawn was then of a more bitter kind than it would have been were she standing upon the very edge of his grave.

Poor Shawn ! How many times during my troubled sleep that night did he come to me in my dreams. How many times while I lay awake did I try to fancy that all this unexpected trouble was but a dream. Poor Shawn ! What had he done to me or to any one else to awaken or excite such resentment in one of the tenderest of human breasts ? My friend, my guide, my companion, and my kind instructor had just been held out before me as one sufficiently vile and corrupt to be shunned. His faithfulness, his honesty, his humanity and his morality could now be of little avail, they seemed to have been accounted as but dross and rubbish ; while his wavering belief or his want of faith in sacred mysteries, or in the incomprehensible, or his conscientious refusal to believe what he could not understand, was set down against him as a crime, which, in the eyes of my mother—who in no other way could possibly do an injustice—was worse than felony. Alas ! what cloud had come over her mind, what evidence of real guilt had she received, how came her judgment to be so distorted ? But the cloud was there, and religious prejudice was her false witness ; and the distortion of her judgment was apparent, and her sentence was ready to be pronounced. Though terribly unjust as all this might seem to be, I was even then uncertain as to whether my mother could be unfairly influenced against our old friend. In anguish and in doubt I felt unable to plead with her in his behalf, and while tears stood in my eyes, my lips were involuntarily framing the words—poor Shawn.



CHAPTER XI.

MY CHANGE OF FAITH.

BEFORE I got up next morning the rain was battering against the window panes, and the wind grew so lusty in its endeavors to find an entrance into my room that it caused the long branch of a tree standing at some distance to tap, or rather to rap, against the glass as if determined to wake me up. And when I did awake and look out no sight could be more dreary. The sea was hidden, the hills had fled away, the distant mountain was removed—the mist and the fog had performed these miracles. Objects scarcely fifty yards distant were almost invisible ; they appeared to be but mere shadows ; and then, as the wind rushed about here and there, they seemed to tremble at its approach, as though dreading a blast of annihilation.

On calm nights when the moon shone I could see from the same window her bright beams upon the waters, and could almost hear the spreading of the wearied waves, fringed with light, along the shore ; and on clear calm mornings I could see little billows in the distance playing as it were along the strand with the early sunbeams. But now how gloomy ! No sounds but those of the rushing wind and the pelting rain, and nothing visible but what one might take to be but the spectral appearances or the misty forms of things that once were. What a difference from the beauty and brightness that could have been surveyed

around only on the previous morning. As I looked at the depressing scene, the contrast with what it had so lately been was no more remarkable than the contrast in my own feelings. At sunrise, the day before, as I looked from the same window, the landscape was most attractive; I could not fancy even Heaven more beautiful. Hope then with me was in the ascendant; my heart was full of joy, and my anticipations were most agreeable. Now I felt almost in a state of despondency, and the future looked nearly as bleak, as clouded, and as dismal, as the sky upon which I had turned my gaze.

In her most religious moments—and many would perhaps say that my mother was afflicted with a superabundance of religious sentiment—she used to tell me that this world was but a dreary waste, a place of temptation and trial. My Methodist aunt used to call it “a howling wilderness,” and say that its treacherous attractions were defiling and sinful. Many and many a time she cautioned me against the vanities of human life, warning me that the wealth, the honors, and the emoluments of earth, for which the majority of mankind were so eager, were debasing, and only too often the cause of an estrangement from Heaven and the loss of priceless souls. She often told me that our natural affections were sinful, when so strong or so deeply rooted as to conflict with our spiritual desires, or to lessen our inclinations for celestial bliss; and that our friendship, and our love, and our hopes, and our fears, should all be held subservient to the demands of religion, and entirely suppressed or abandoned when we discovered that they had the slightest tendency to make us forgetful of God.

Gloomy as I felt this morning, I could not, however, coincide with my mother as to her views of human existence, or as to the suppression of those feelings and emotions which in the aggregate bring more happiness than sorrow to every life. Troubled

as I felt about Shawn, I could not give him up, or view him in the light that my mother might view him, or judge him as she was inclined to judge. . Notwithstanding what she had said, I could not discover, so far as I was then capable of understanding, that Shawn had ever said one word against any correct principle, or expressed any dangerous opinions hostile to humanity, or had done any act of which I could not fully approve. Even at that early and impressible period of my life, my belief was demanded for much which my reason had at once rejected, and I could not smother that innate feeling of confidence and respect I had for one who was the first to lead me out of the labyrinth of doubt and perplexity in which I had found myself too often involved. Though I had almost unbounded confidence in the opinions and decisions of my mother, yet in this matter, in which Shawn was so deeply concerned, I was somehow forced to conclude that she was perhaps wrong. What ! my kind old friend to be avoided as an evil companion, and his suggestions and advice to be held as dangerous or contaminating ! No, I could not feel this way towards him ; in so doing I would be unfaithful to correct principle ; for in all my intercourse with Shawn every word and every act of his bore undoubted evidence of his strict regard for justice and truth.

Gloomy as things now appeared, I could not give up the world or view it from the same stand-point that my mother mostly viewed it. Shrouded as its beauties now were from my eyes, my mental aspect of the creation was still glorious. And though I was then, as it were, under lowering clouds and in the midst of doubt and depression, I could after all see the least gleam of hope ; and that little ray was sufficient to bid me have some trust in the future. Give up the world ? Impossible ! It seemed to me that life was given in order that I should enjoy existence physically and intellect-

ually ; that sight was given that I might delight in the beauties of creation. I had a heart, and its most loving and impulsive throbs were for creatures of the earth ; I had emotions and affections which had the tenderest longings for those around me. Heaven was no doubt sublime and beautiful. Saints, and angels, and archangels, were for a certainty grand and glorious beings. But what was the unknown heaven to the little paradise I had here ? And what were the strange celestial inhabitants, praising, or singing, or smiling, or austere, to the relatives or friends, to the faces and bosoms, to the voices and hearts, of those who were already so near and dear to me. Give up the world ? No. Give up my mother for the fairest madonna ? Give up my sister for the brightest angel ? Give up little Jane for the most beautiful seraph ? I could not do so. I could not take up such a cross. I could not forget my father, or my brother, or Shawn ; or overlook the ties of consanguinity or friendship to secure an intercourse with any even in a more exalted sphere. No, my Heaven was already here, and—though the pious may consider it a proof of natural degeneracy—I wanted as yet no closer communication with either saints, or angels, or the elect, than I had even now among those whom I had found to be the blessed of the earth ; among those whom my heart had already canonized.

To draw near the celestial region as my dear mother, and my aunt, and other religious persons would have me approach it, only made the reputed narrow way more gloomy and repulsive ; and even supernal glory itself to be rather unattractive. Many will have happiness to be ever far far off, something beyond our present reach, or that which belongs only to the future. The tales of the gorgeous scenery of distant lands may create discontent in the minds of many of the imaginative, and lead them to long for the mountain peak, or wild ravine, or giddy

cliff, or thundering cataract of the exulting foreigner ; and while yearning for these, they may close their eyes to the natural beauty around them, or become indifferent to the perceptible yet quieter landscapes of their native country, and thereby wantonly deprive themselves of much enjoyment. The distant stars in the blue firmament may excite our wonder and admiration—they are objects of grandeur and fitted for the vast regions of space—but while gazing occasionally on these, we should never look with contempt on the little lights that serve to illumine our way, and to cheer the spot of earth which we may chance to occupy.

These were the thoughts that occurred during the half-hour or so that I stood at the window, and on the whole my reverie after all was rather agreeable. Though the clouds still lowered, and the rain poured down, and the wind rushed about, and the weather remained dreary, yet I could be comparatively cheerful were it not for my sympathy for Shawn. The moment I considered his position, that moment I became again depressed. Still, though dispirited as I was on his account, I formed the resolution of saying something in his favor. If I could not succeed in satisfying my mother, I should try my father, and I should enlist my sister, and my brother, and Jane in his behalf ; and if all failed I felt, that come what would, nothing should alienate me from him who had such a claim on my highest regards.

While thinking of this and of other matters, I had for the time quite forgotten what had been arranged to take place that morning. Mass was to be celebrated at eight o'clock, and after that I was to be made a Catholic. I must say that when consideration came, I was, like many who have promised their hand or made vows rather hastily, now very reluctant to be led to the altar ; for the one which I was to approach was not

a thing of the imagination, or a figurative altar, but it was that lighted and decorated erection belonging to the Church of Rome, before which I was to disavow an old creed and adopt a new belief. Truly I wished at the moment that my mother had never pressed me to consent to change my faith. I felt quite indifferent myself as to whether I was called a Protestant or a Catholic. I knew little as to the nature or true meaning of religion, certainly little or nothing as to the real cause of religious disputes; and I had scarcely the slightest predilection for one creed more than for another. The profession I was now about to make was one to gratify my mother; but what if in so doing I was treating my father's desires concerning me with the greatest disregard. I knew well, particularly from what I had lately been told, that his intention was, that I, as well as my brother, should be brought up as members of the Church of England, and now, heedless of these purposes—and conflicting with the most solemn arrangements made before I was born—I had agreed to become a member of the Church of Rome. My disobedience to him, as well as my mother's pious deception, might be kept from him for a time. Who could say how long? But, should it come to his knowledge, I could not help feeling that it would most likely be as Shawn had partly predicted—a wrong that he might never forget or never forgive. Impressed with this idea, I felt as if I had a premonition of danger, and I grew a little nervous. I was really more concerned for my mother than I was for myself. I was a boy and could brave it out some way, or become a Protestant again if necessary; but she was sensitive, and would feel the shock of my father's anger or indignation; she would droop, and might be made unhappy for life. Still feeling that while she would deplore such a result, I well knew that she would be willing to make any sacrifice for her

faith, and that no matter what earthly bliss was to be forfeited, with the spirit of a martyr she would cling to her Church even if every other hope were lost to her forever. How could I therefore help feeling miserable? I however hurried my preparations, my mother promised to call me early, the time was now nearly up, and when she came, smiling and apparently very happy, she led me away, and as we went along I scarcely spoke a word, but had doleful forebodings and that peculiar sinking of heart which a poor condemned criminal must have on his way to execution. I was about to take up a heavy cross.

The house was very quiet this morning; the wind and the rain could be heard outside, but within all seemed to be unusually calm. I was in my mother's apartment. We knelt, and she made a kind of preparatory prayer for me; it was one of her intercessory invocations to the Blessed Virgin.—My poor mother! How her tender heart must have long yearned for my deliverance from a schismatical creed! She gave me a few instructions—which I forgot as soon as I heard—as to what I should answer or say if interrogated by the clergyman, and when we were ready to go, she handed me a gold coin which I was to present as my first offering to the Church.

"I shall give this also, ma," said I; "it is the picture of a saint or angel which ought to be on the altar with the pictures of the other saints, this day above all others. See—how beautiful!"

I handed her the portrait and watched her face closely. She looked at it for a moment or two, I saw her lip tremble a little, then tears filled her eyes and she seemed in a state of abstraction. She looked at the little picture with a kind of pitiful gaze, and in a short time muttered a prayer for the repose of the departed soul, and then said, "Poor, poor Mary!"

"Do you know who this is, child?" said she, turning to me and holding the portrait partly before me.

"I thought at first it was you, ma," I replied; "now I know that it is the likeness of my Aunt Mary."

"Where did you get this?—How long have you had it?" asked she, referring to the miniature.

"I found it in the big room. It was partly hidden in a little place in the wall in the recess—I can show you where it was."

She seemed surprised, and asked, "Who told you it was your Aunt Mary?"

"Shawn."

"Did you show it to any one else?"

"No; only to you, ma. I would have shown it to you before only that——." I was not willing to finish the sentence; I did not want to explain, neither did I wish to say how long I had had it. She noticed my hesitation, but did not press me further.

"We shall place it on the altar, my dear," said she, putting the portrait in her bosom. "It is a saintly picture which will infuse devotion into another heart besides my own—poor Mary," said she again, sadly, "God be merciful to your soul!"

We entered the big room; it was to me more gloomy than it appeared on the preceding evening. The shadow of my own dreary thoughts seemed to lie there before me. The window-blinds were down, and though there were lighted candles on the altar, I thought they made the place look only more solemn and funereal. My sister and Nelly Carberry knelt before the altar reading their prayer books; besides these there were four or five women whom I did not recognize—only one of these seemed to take any notice of us—repeating prayers and counting beads, and bent down in the very humblest attitude of devotion. All

present were dressed in black. I could hear these women sigh at intervals, and then the wind outside sighed as if in response. One might imagine at the moment that departed spirits were awaiting around and soliciting the final prayer which would liberate them from their purgatorial prison forever. My mother and I knelt at one side, further from the altar than the others. She was praying fervently. I had made the sign of the cross—a preliminary to religious duties with which I had long been made familiar—and was trying to repeat a prayer which my mother had taught me ; it was one to the Virgin, and now I could scarcely remember more than three words of it. It commenced “ Hail, holy queen ! ” I muttered this appellation over and over, but could not get on, and while I knelt there chilly and uncomfortable, a little bell tinkled, I looked up and a priest in black vestments stood before the altar ; his back was to us, he was saying Latin prayers, and a boy near him dressed in white responded in the same tongue.

I had attended church and had heard mass said before to-day. My mother had taken me privately more than once to the great church near our house, mostly, if not always, on week days. It would have been too great a risk to have taken me on Sundays, for my father was then generally at home. To-day the priest seemed unusually solemn in his manner ; indeed I thought I had heard him sigh more than once, and when he repeated the prayer used in masses for the dead commencing, “ *Memento etiam Domine,* ” and ending with the words, “ *et dormiunt in sommo pacis,* ” he and others in the room were visibly affected, and I know that my mother’s eyes were filled with tears at the time, and afterwards very often during the service. This mass, as I then understood, was offered up in behalf of my Aunt Mary, in the hope that God would relent a little to shorten her sufferings, or exempt her from further purgatorial penalties.

I also remember that tears fell on the little book—"The Key of Heaven"—I was holding, while I tried to read the prayers which my mother had pointed out; part of one ended thus, "As there may be many of my friends, relatives, or ancestors, tormented in these intense flames, who were the instruments of thy providence in bestowing on me existence, education and innumerable other blessings, grant that I may be the means of obtaining for them a speedy release from their excessive sufferings, and a free admission to thy eternal joys, through," &c. Part of another was, "Alas! while myriads of blessed spirits see, love, and enjoy Thee incessantly,—while they are inebriated with the plenty of thy house—the souls of these thy servants are perhaps burning in flames, plunged in darkness, and far removed from the light of heaven. O, Thou who art infinite in mercy be not deaf to my supplications for their speedy relief! O blessed angels and saints vouchsafe to join me in making intercession for my Aunt Mary, and obtain for her admittance into your happy society." There were several other prayers of this kind to be read, and none could repeat them more fervently than I did.

Ah me! though I had never seen my poor Aunt Mary, how deeply I felt this day for her supposed torments, and how willingly would I have taken her place in order that the heavens might be opened to receive her forever. I knew scarcely anything of her history; I knew nothing of any great sin that she had committed. She had no doubt sinned to some extent like other mortals; for I had been frequently told that we are all shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; and that every one coming into the world is born under condemnation for the original transgression of our first parents.—No; she with the poor pleading face that I had seen in the portrait, could never have committed any sin deserving of condemnation; her suffer-

ings would be but temporary, and then she would be exalted with the redeemed to the realms of eternal glory.

I do not believe that I raised my head even once during the hour or so that it took to celebrate the mass. I think I must have been kneeling most of the time, for though others stood, and sat, and knelt at intervals, I felt someway disinclined to alter my position, tiresome as I had found it. At last, a short time before the service was ended, I stood up. Just then the clergyman's face was turned towards us as with outstretched hands he repeated the last "*Dominus vobiscum*," and, though robed as he was in his black vestments, I knew him again, and with palpitating heart I once more recognized the pale, sad countenance of the spectre priest.

My mother felt me trembling at her side ; my face must have become pallid, for a sudden fear and weakness came over me. I was almost powerless, and it was useless to try and resist the feeling that oppressed me at the time. She was alarmed and led me aside to a seat near the window. She sprinkled my forehead—in the hurry, holy water had I believe been used ; the efficacy of the remedy had been perhaps considered greater by her on that account—I leant my head against her breast and in a minute or two I grew more collected. A short time afterwards most of those present had left the room, and when I opened my eyes again I saw the priest approaching us. His outward vestment or chasuble was off, but I thought he looked as ghostly as ever in his long *alb*, with the black *stole* crossed upon his breast. He made some inquiry about me, and then, with serious face, he looked steadily at mine—still a sorrowful look—but I partly turned my head aside to avoid what might be a searching gaze, and awaited my baptism.

I knew but little of what followed ; for the next half-hour I was like the principal actor in a troubled dream. I scarcely

know how I became a Catholic. Something was said to me ; I said something in return—merely repeating the necessary form of words as suggested by my mother. She kissed me when the ceremony was over, so did my sister and Nelly Carberry. The priest took my hand. I was, in spite of all I could do, in terror during the moment he held it ; and then I shuddered as I handed him the offering—the gold coin which my mother had given me. I saw him shudder in return when she handed him the portrait ; and while he leant against the altar looking mournfully at the sainted face of the picture, I hurried out of the room feeling that though I had got rid of the secret which I had kept from my mother, she, or the priest, had one hidden from me ; and I had a more dangerous one now to hide from my father.





CHAPTER XII.

AN EARLY BETROTHAL.

I AROSE early the next day ; it was bright and beautiful. The sky was as clear and as blue as I had ever seen it. A single golden cloudlet seemed to have sought repose upon the broad back of a distant hill, and it lay there apparently in smiling slumber like some bright fleecy wanderer of the air confident in the protecting care of some sullen giant. The lark could be heard on high as if heralding the early sunbeams, and the soft song of the thrush in the neighboring grove reached the ear, making the most pleasing melody. The very flowers in their renewed beauty and glittering wealth of dew, appeared to hold up their heads after their long hours of tribulation in the storm ; those sweet meek emblems of innocence and evanescence (how like the kind and gentle in human form !) seemed only desirous of making the most of their short stay on earth by rendering the air around them to be but fragrance and purity.

What a delightful change ! Forgetful of the gloom of yesterday, of my baptism, and even of the priest himself, I felt exceedingly happy, and I stood at the window feasting my eyes on fresh beauty, and inhaling the invigorating redolence that had escaped from the virgin blushes of the dawn. I felt that I had almost regained my wonted cheerfulness, and I began to

think that my fears concerning Shawn were rather groundless, and that now, as I was a member of my mother's Church, she would overlook what he had said to me on religious subjects. Yes, the change every way seemed to give me pleasure ; everything I looked at around the place seemed bright and joyous. The old house itself, that had withstood many a fierce blast, was now all aglow in the early sunlight. Within, every apartment appeared to have been lit up by the rosy beams of morning, as if to signal the advent of happiness. The altar had been removed, the sunlight streamed in the windows, the gloom had disappeared, and the big room had once more resumed its usual appearance. Little Jane had returned. She came back the evening before, shortly after the rain had ceased, and though she did not know I was a Catholic, I felt additional pleasure in feeling that I was some way drawn a little closer to her, on account of knowing that I could claim to be a member of the Church to which she belonged. I never saw my mother look more happy than when I entered the breakfast-room that morning.

She saw with satisfaction that there was not the slightest trace or effect of the agitation that had so disconcerted me the day before ; in fact she said I never looked better. Every one present was as smiling as the sunlight that made the furniture in the room look new and polished ; and the things on the table appeared to shine with a brilliancy I had never noticed until then ; and when Nelly Carberry came in with the toast and other eatables, there was such a peculiar expression of satisfaction in her face that it afforded me a pleasure to watch her movements as she waited at the table. Of course it never occurred to me to consider the cause of the gratified feeling observable in the manner of my mother and Nelly, any more than it did for me to consider the cause in the change of the

weather from being cold and dreary to that of being bright and warm. Our conversation while at breakfast was of the most enlivening kind. My mother told us anecdotes of her school-days, and of pleasant persons and places she had once known and visited ; and while she entertained us this way she was sure to try and convey instruction. And then Ellen and Jane chatted and laughed about one thing or another ; besides Jane gave us a rather humorous account of her visit on the preceding day, and of how she made a mistake by taking a deaf old lady she had met at dinner to be a person who had once been at her father's, and whom, rumor at one time said, he had been engaged to marry.

Breakfast was scarcely over before we heard the report of heavy guns near and at a distance ; and then we heard the sound of music. We all ran to the window. The guard-ship—the *Semiramis*—had fired a salute, and we could see a large frigate in full sail and covered all over with flags entering the harbor, while a number of yachts were flitting to and fro in every direction. The sight was, I think, one of the grandest I ever witnessed. How we wished that pa, and William and my aunt were with us to witness this naval display ; but they were not to be down until the arrival of the evening boat from the city. My mother said that, as everything was prepared for their reception, and as there was nothing of any importance to keep her or my sister in the house, we should have a holiday and stay out until evening, and then be at the landing when the steamer came with our friends. This was a joyous privilege ; we could go to many pleasant places, and have delightful rambles, and we all hurried to get ready.

I was not long making my preparations, and I took the opportunity, while the others were not present, to go to my mother's room and speak to her about Shawn. Of course I

pleaded for him and begged her not to show him any mark of her displeasure ; and above all things not to complain of him to my father. She heard quietly what I had to say, and then replied with more seriousness of manner than I expected : “ I have been thinking since about what you have told me of Shawn. It has, my dear, grieved me very much, but I cannot as yet altogether forget his goodness and faithfulness to us, and particularly his kindness and attachment to you. It is a most serious matter to deal with, so serious, that I am certain were your father to know what I know, at least were he to know all you have told me, he would I dare say discharge Shawn at once. Our holy Church will not tolerate the discussion of sacred things by laymen ; even by the most intelligent. For one of our Popes has decreed as nearly as I can remember in these words : ‘ We forbid all lay persons to discuss matters of faith, under the pain of excommunication.’* Our frail reason is totally insufficient to deal with holy mysteries. One of our most eminent men, Pascal, says ‘ The principles of theology are above nature and reason,’ and he further says, ‘ If your religion be false, you risk nothing in believing it true ; if it be true, you risk all in believing it false.’—Reason ! To reason on such a subject as the mysteries of religion is madness ; even that poor unfortunate apostate, Luther, boldly declared that ‘ Reason is the bride of the devil ;’ and, with regard to belief in Christianity, distinguished Protestant ministers have proclaimed against the admission of a single doubt. For instance, Dr. Chalmers wrote ‘ It behoves us to make an entire and unconditional surrender of our minds to all the duty and to all the information which the Bible sets before us ;’ and Dr. Arnold said, that whenever doubts arose in his mind in regard to dogmas of the established church his method was ‘ to pause in his

* Decretal of Pope Alexander IV.

inquiries' and 'to put down objections by main force.' I have heard your father quote these expressions of Protestant ministers, [Hittel Vol. I., pp. 258-9] and many others of similar kind, sufficiently often to know that he would not tolerate such discussion as would end in skepticism; and when educated men make such acknowledgements, and are so guarded, how foolish it is for a poor ignorant man like Shawn to presume to judge of what is, or is not, worthy of our belief.

"But I shall do nothing hastily. For your sake, my dear, I shall say nothing of it at present to your father. I shall, however, take an opportunity of speaking to Shawn, and of proving to him, as far as I am able, that the views he holds concerning religion are most dangerous. As I said before, no matter how honest, or how faithful, or how much attached to us, or to you, Shawn may be, so long as he is ignorant and perverse with regard to sacred subjects, so long as he endeavors to infect others with the poison of the most sacrilegious opinions, so long shall I consider him unfit society for my children, or for any one whose salvation might be endangered by his reflections on religion. I had long wondered why it was that your brother exhibited so much indifference to devotional duties. I have heard him treat the most reverent questions with levity, and I was greatly perplexed to find out how his mind had become tainted with skepticism. He, a mere boy, was in his laughing manner always reasoning and subjecting holy mysteries and truths, far beyond our comprehension, to the test of reason. He was for doubting this authority, and for explaining away that, until I knew not what to think. Now I have good reason to believe that his intimacy with Shawn has brought him to this condition. How deplorable therefore it is to think that it is far more easy to leave a false impression on the mind of the young than to remove it afterwards! Yes, Shawn is the

cause, and do you not see how necessary it is that his evil influence, at least over the young, should be circumscribed and counteracted.

"As for you, my dear child, you are now comparatively safe. You are now, thank God, within the fold ; you have taken up the cross, and as I have a strong impression that my prayers have been heard for your conversion, I feel that they will also be heard for your continuance in the faith. No, my dear, I have now but little fear on your account ; my great regret at present is that I cannot as yet take you openly with me to church. We must still keep what has been done a secret from you father ; but when you kneel in a Protestant place of worship you can offer your prayers to the blessed Mary, and to the saints, as well as if you were before the altar ; and the Heavenly Mother will hear you, my child, and your prayers will be accepted. This is a pious necessity, and our holy Church, ever ready to accommodate itself to certain circumstances, has provided for such requirements. As peculiar means are counted lawful to counteract the designs of the enemy, we know that our Holy Father has power to grant dispensations to do that which, at first view, may seem irregular or improper. But where the interests of the Faith are concerned extraordinary efforts have to be made, and are so made without incurring liability as for actual sin. For instance, those eminent clergy, the Jesuit Fathers, deem no personal sacrifice too great to extend the power and authority of his Holiness. It is said that they mingle in ordinary society as painters, poets, musicians and teachers, and while disguising their real names as well as their real opinions as to matters of faith, and even occasionally uttering mild sentiments against their own Church, they drop a few words here and there as occasion may offer, words which engender doubt, and which finally lead many to an abandonment of the so-called reformed

religion. And more than this, these self-denying men actually become priests or worshippers in heathen temples, and I have heard and believe that they become pastors, and influential pastors too, of Protestant churches.* It is said that they may be found enrolled as members in nearly every Pagan, or Mohammedan, or Christian denomination. They bow before false gods while mocking them in their hearts, or planning their overthrow; they enter Protestant pulpits, and preach Protestant doctrines which are gradually diluted almost to the consistency of our own; and they introduce forms, and ceremonies, and pictures, and statues, and even the crucifix itself, into Protestant churches, to make their hearers familiar with such. Toleration of the ancient or primitive Church is then advocated, and rancorous feeling against the authority of the Pope is pronounced uncharitable, until in the course of time the pastor, prompted, as it were, by his more extended reading and inquiry, and urged on by his conscientious scruples, feels it incumbent on him as a lover of truth, and as an upholder of rightful authority to apply for admission into the True Church, and when its doors are thrown open by his entreaty, he humbly enters, many of his congregation follow, and the majority of those who hesitate remain only nominal Protestants and continue in a state of uncertainty ever after. .

"Those are some of the methods which our holy Church has been forced to adopt in consequence of the great sin of the Reformation; a sin for which saints have suffered on earth,

* EXTRACT FROM THE JESUITS' OATH.—"I do further promise and declare, that notwithstanding I am dispensed with to assume any religion heretical, for propagation of the Mother Church's interest, to keep secret and private all agents' counsels, as they entrust me, and not to divulge, directly or indirectly, by word, writing or circumstance whatsoever, but to execute all which shall be proposed, given in charge, or discovered unto me, by you my ghostly father, or by any one of this Convent. All of which I — do swear by the blessed Trinity," &c., &c., &c.—*Dowling's History*, p. 605.

and angels have wept in Heaven. But, my dear, the Lord is powerful and will not forget His people. For wise purposes He has permitted His Church to be maligned and persecuted, but the time is close at hand when it will arise once more in its primitive grandeur, and when the nations of the world—when principalities and powers, and all from the highest to the most humble—shall bow down before our Holy Father and acknowledge that he alone is the vicar of Christ upon earth.”

Of course I was in a manner astonished at these admissions of my poor mother; admissions made with a firm belief in the purity of the means adopted. Young as I was I could not but feel that there was something very singular in this license to dissemble, which she in all sincerity considered not only prudent but innocent on the part of the authorities of the Catholic Church.—I was in doubt. How could I pronounce against that which she evidently approved of? It might after all be right, even though in actual conflict with my sense of what seemed proper. I did not care to speculate on the question. I took it for granted that her view was best as to what the Church should do under the circumstances, and I was now quite willing to acquiesce; more particularly as she seemed inclined to overlook; at least for a time, the indiscretion of my poor friend Shawn.

I had a chance to have a few words with my old friend before we went out. Poor unsuspecting Shawn! He little thought that the greatest trouble on my mind could then be about him; greater perhaps than he ever imagined there could be any reason for. He saw however that I appeared in good spirits, and when I expressed my regret that he was not to accompany us, he only smiled and replied that he and I should have another pleasant ramble before the time came for our return to the city.

We left the house together; my mother and Ellen led the way, while Jane and I loitered a short distance behind them.

We walked side by side and held a little basket between us ; for Jane, unlike perhaps most of her age, was very industrious and brought her knitting or sewing with her to employ her time. Poor happy little dreamer ! She probably had never thought of the laborious employment which Time forces on too many of her own age and sex ; or of how many thousand of the unfortunate are doomed, like Sisyphus, ever, and ever, and ever, to roll the huge stone of care up the hill ; the time nearly of their whole lives being wasted and made miserable in useless and incessant efforts to pass the summit of the mountain of difficulties before them. I told her that her work would not be needed. I think she thought so herself, but still she would have it with her. We chatted away as usual, and made innocent observations as to the past, present, and the future, and I said how delightful it would be were she and I always to be together—wondering whether we could possibly ever be separated.

“Why, you silly fellow,” said she archly, “for what reason should we be separated or stay in different places ? We can live along with each other as other people do. We could be partners like your pa and mine, couldn’t we ?”

“Of course we could,” I replied, highly pleased ; but then after a moment’s consideration I added, “but partners, you know, don’t always live in the same house. Your pa’s house and my pa’s are not even in the same street.”

“In fact they are not,” said she, a little perplexed by the reflection ; “but I have it now—couldn’t we get married like other people ?”

“Well, I declare,” said I, delighted, “I never thought of that ! To be sure we could—that’s just the very thing.”

“And then,” said she, “wouldn’t we be man and wife like big grown up people ?”

"Yes, yes," said I, quite enraptured with the idea; "that's the thing! I'd be the husband, and you'd be the wife, and——"

"And we would always live in the same house, in the very same house," said she, a little excited, "and in the very same street?"

"Oh, yes," I continued hastily, "and we would see each other every day—nearly all the time—every, every day!"

"And Ellen, and your ma, could be with us," said she, almost breathless, "and Nelly too."

"Yes, and your pa, and mine, and Shawn," I added, hurriedly. "Oh, won't that be fine! And you can have your flower-pots, and a long swing between two trees, and we shall make a nice little garden, and we can dig it and fix it ourselves with shells and gravel walks."

"And we shall have a lot of pictures in all the rooms," said she, with continued eagerness. "I have ever so many saints and angels to hang up; some have only heads and wings, and some have none at all. There's St. Patrick behind pa's desk in the office, with a beard, and with his long hat, and his green cloak, and his long crook, tramping on the big snakes that are trying to bite his legs."

"And I can get St. George to put alongside of him," said I, interrupting her. "St. George is now by himself in our garret at home, upon a big grey horse, and he's killing a horrid fiery dragon, with his big teeth and great mouth wide open."

In our innocent excitement we were not at the moment very particular as to the arrangement of our words, and our blunders will, no doubt, be excused. Older persons in our situation would most likely have said something far more nonsensical and ridiculous. Any way, Jane and I, as we went slowly along in the sunshine, were busy making many household arrangements,

and we had matters pretty well settled when she became suddenly silent and stood still.

"Oh, why did I forget?" said she, looking at me rather sadly.

"Forget what?" said I, a little surprised—"But you haven't—I've got it," and I drew from my pocket a piece of cake and a little roll of Berlin wool that she had left on the table in her hurry out. She smiled at my mistake and said she wished that that was all. "What can it be, then," I asked; "is it anything else?"

"I forgot what I have often heard pa say," she replied; "that man and wife should always be of the same religion. Our Church says so, too."

"Well, of course," said I at once, "you and I are the same."

"Oh no, John, we are not the same; for you are a Protestant, and I am a Catholic."

"No, I'm a Catholic too. I was——," I hesitated just in time. In fact I was on the point of telling her what had taken place in the big room the day before. "I was only baptized a Protestant, but," urged I, "couldn't I be christened over again and be a Catholic as you are?"

"No, no, that wouldn't do at all," said she, rather emphatically. "You must never be a Catholic. If you were to change that way, every one would call you a turn-coat and despise you—I almost believe I would think less of you myself. And people would call you bad names, and wouldn't believe a word you said; but would say that you were bought or bribed to turn."

"Oh, nonsense!" said I, hastily; "People wouldn't bother their heads about what I was."

"Yes, but they would," she replied. "If you did something

else very bad, many would pity you or forgive you ; but all think it disgraceful to be a turn-coat. You have heard about Father Burk that turned and was made a Protestant minister, and about Parson Smith that turned and was made a priest ; and of how they wrote against each other in the papers, and hated each other ; and how every one else hated them, and called them dirty apostates. No, it would never do for you to change your religion. But I'll tell you," said she, lowering her voice a little, "how we can manage it—I shall become a Protestant ! I shall, I shall, I shall," reiterated she on perceiving that I looked at her greatly surprised, "I shall become a Protestant, for you know they seldom blame a woman for being what her husband is—most women change that way—while a man is almost always despised for giving up to his wife."

What could I say in reply ? I dared not explain. Then I was on the point of confiding in her and revealing my fresh secret ; then I hesitated again lest somehow the story of my baptism should reach my father's ears, and my poor mother perhaps become a sufferer in consequence ; and thinking again of Shawn's fears I deemed it but wisdom to wait in expectation of at least some more suitable opportunity to tell her all.

Oh, what pleasant places we went to that day ! What blissful hours we spent in the soft sunshine and in the delightful shade ! In fact every spot we visited seemed enchanted. The natural beauties we then witnessed will ever remain a sweet picture in my memory. How a happy serenity of mind makes the most ordinary objects seem attractive ; we look, as it were, through a spiritual lens that restores to earth the fancied pristine glories of Paradise. I looked at everything around with glowing eyes that would at the time have seen beauty even in deformity. It seemed as if the glorious arch, the mystic spirit of the summer cloud, were no longer to appear as the hallowed

token of peace said to have been made between God and man, but that the gorgeous colors of the rainbow—no longer to be kept solely for the sky—were now mingling with the sunlight and scattered far and wide over the whole earth. The sunbeams, with magic touch, had painted the heavens blue, and the mountains purple, and the hills green, and the rocks red, and the waters bright; and then the fields were spread out in their magnificence of verdure, inviting flocks and herds; and trees rose up crowned with the richest foliage, and with shining leaves that whispered loving secrets to the winged creatures of the air; and russet mossy banks nestling here and there in shaded places seemed to offer us spots on which to recline or slumber. We remained, and for hours we sat, and sang, and talked, and rambled, as if life were to be but one continued holiday, and the far, far off future but the shining portal to Heaven.

We had all our pleasant dreams that day, and I think Jane and I had more felicity in weaving our golden threads of fancy, than many have had in the fairest visions of hope, or in the dreams they dreamt during their whole existence.





CHAPTER XIII.

HARMONY AND JEALOUSY.

WE were at the landing before the boat touched the wharf. We were delighted to see my father, my aunt Catherine, and my brother on board; and Jane was equally pleased to see her father. Mr. Casey's stout form was easily recognized; he stood near my aunt bowing to us and waving his hand; and William looked quite sailor-like, wearing a blue jacket and a glazed cap, and to appear more in character he got up a little way in the rigging so as to attract our attention. I could not fail to admire him at the time. His smiling face, his red cheeks, and his brown hair, and his wild but good-natured freaks—as if to astonish us—made him conspicuous, and I must confess that I felt a somewhat peculiar feeling when Jane said he was really a handsome fellow.

We got home before six, and as the evening was very fine, we had tea outside, in the summer-house. I never enjoyed a repast so much as I did then. If cheerfulness is almost equal to hunger in making one relish a meal, we had sufficient of it at the time to make even the plainest mess of pottage most palatable. Everyone seemed to be in the happiest mood, and I am sure that I never before saw my aunt in such good spirits; she appeared to take pleasure in leading off in jokes and laughter. Humorous as my father could often be, she surpassed

him entirely on that occasion. An old maiden lady, a Miss Burnett, had called to spend the evening with us, and as Mr. Casey was a good natured man and a widower, my aunt made a special attack on him, reproving him for his apparent indifference to a renewal of nuptial blessedness, and warmly recommending her friend Miss Burnett as worthy of his earnest consideration. While poor Miss Burnett was supposed to blush—she must have done so—Mr. Casey drew his hand across his forehead, patted his round and partly-bald head, and of course accepted the badinage and my aunt's left-handed compliments in his usual genial manner. My father also seemed to take a wicked pleasure in urging her on and enjoying his partner's discomfiture, until my mother at last had to exclaim: "Oh Kate, Kate, Kate, have pity on the poor man and let him alone." A general laugh then followed, and my aunt turned her attention to some one else. Demure, and almost sad, as I had seen her at times under a peculiar influence—indeed rather too frequently—she now appeared as lively and indifferent as if she considered herself free from any further accountability resulting, against the whole human race, from the frailty of our mother Eve, or from the fall of our great progenitor in the garden of Paradise.

We went out into our own garden after tea. My aunt, still mischievously inclined, managed to place old Miss Burnett in care of Mr. Casey, and of course she did not refrain from making sundry suggestive remarks as they walked together. Ellen and William, and Jane and I, rambled around here and there. We went into the orchard, and through leafy avenues covered with grape vines, and among shrubs and flowers. Those who saw us flitting about in our lightheartedness might be inclined to say that we were fit companions for the fragrant, blushing things around us. My brother had so much to tell us in his

lively way that we had but to listen and then to laugh at what he said. He had evidently made up his mind to monopolize the conversation, and as he could mimic or burlesque, we were greatly amused, and we listened to his stories until it was time to go into the house.

I felt sorry to leave the garden. I could have remained outside—with Jane—until midnight. The solemn grandeur of the fading scenery around us made us grow silent, and scarcely a word was said while we watched the hills shading into dim outlines, and saw other objects disappear. We stood still, however, for a time longer. Now a faint gleam was seen in the distance, and a cloud here and there shaped itself overhead and fringed itself with brightness. And then came the moon rising queenly, as it were, out of the sea, while the waves, crowned with light, appeared to surround her as if she were a goddess of the ocean, and to bow before her in adoration. I know that it was with regret that we had to bid good night to the flowers, and to leave them and the beautiful glittering landscape to be gazed at, for many lingering hours, perhaps only by the silent stars.

All was cheerfulness in the parlor. We had to play and to sing. Everyone in the house was fond of music, none more so than Shawn. I left the door partly open in order that he and Nelly Carberry could hear us better. William and I had been with him, and we put a chair for him near the door so that he could sit and listen. We had flute and piano duetts. My father played well on the flute and my mother generally accompanied him, and as my brother could play a little on the violin we had trios also. And then we had glees and quartettes, a few of Moore's melodies, and two or three sentimental songs, that had the effect of reminding some present of old times, and then we had a few sweet airs from British authors, and classical pieces

from Verdi, and Balfe, and Auber, and Bellini, and Donizetti and others, until the hearts and souls of all within hearing seemed to have been much impressed by the harmony. After this there was whist and some Irish whiskey punch—rather a fair allowance. Of course only my father and Mr. Casey partook of the latter; my father, I think, imbibed somewhat generously and his eye became exceedingly bright under some influence, which very rarely operated on him. He soon grew tired of whist—the game was altogether too quiet—he threw the cards aside and stood up—I had never before seen him so exhilarated—and then he sung us a song and gave us a recitation from Shakespeare; and moreover he declared his intention of expressing his sentiments before us all. My mother, for some reason, tried hard to prevail on him to sit down and say nothing, but her efforts were useless, they only made him more eager to speak.

“No,” said he, turning from her with energy, “I shall not allow this opportunity to pass, I must say what I have to say, what it is my duty to say; I must utter my sentiments freely and unreservedly, or explode. Ally,” said he, addressing my mother, while he stood particularly erect and with his head well thrown back, “you must listen, even if my words should cause every drop of blood in your body to rise to your face. Ally, I know your worth, and know what you have ever been to me, constant, faithful, loving and true. There is not a particle of deception in your nature, not an atom, any one that looks at your face must see that; I say they must, for no one of common sense can come to any other conclusion. I say again that I know your worth, and no one dares to contradict me. I’ve had now over twenty years’ experience of you through sunshine and through storm, and by—no, I won’t swear—but you’re one of the best and the truest women I ever met; yes, I

will say it, the very truest. Though there are other ladies present they won't feel slighted, and they won't deny it, and if they do—well, I can't help it. But," continued he emphatically, "I know I'm right, and I'd like to know who says I'm wrong; and look here, see her children," and he pointed to us with a very triumphant air. "I'll make a sea captain of this fellow," said he, laying his hand on my brother's shoulder; "he already wears a blue jacket, and if he looks sharp he will yet be an Admiral of the blue; he's got it in him; yes, of the red, white and blue; and now, I say, three cheers for these glorious colors."

My mother made another effort to induce him to sit down, but he only stepped back at her approach and gave her a contemptuous wave of his hand. "And here's the girl," said he, just touching my sister's cheek with the point of his finger, "here's a girl with the very face of her mother, but whom she can never excel; she's one of the right stamp, and I know what's in store for her." And here is little Jack," said he, clapping me on the back, "here's little Jack, just entering his teens, solid and sensible like his mother, and though he is still delicate, he'll soon be all right. Jack will be a parson, or a scientist—he can't be both, for they tell me those fellows can never agree—or a Christian statesman, for he's got piety and brains, I tell you. I've left him almost, so far, to his mother and to Shawn; they have both taken good care to bring him up in the fear of God, just as I'd have him; besides, Shawn is a genius, a natural born philosopher.—Where is Shawn? Where is he? there's not the like of him on earth. Shawn, I say!" My father was hastily and unceremoniously about to leave the room to look for Shawn, when, at a beck from me, he entered.

"Dan," said my father, with curled lip, and with a proud but stern expression of face, addressing his partner and grasping

Shawn by the shoulder, "Dan Casey, I say there's not the like of this man on or upon the whole habitable globe.—Shawn, toss off that tumbler, come, finish my glass, 'twill do you good."

Shawn merely tasted it to please my father; he held the glass for a while and then stealthily tried to put it on the table.

"Aha!" said my father, detecting the movement, "you must drink it; you have always been too temperate; you are, I suppose, one of Father Mathew's disciples. I don't care, however, for what these temperance men say, they go too far, even in opposition to the very command of the Scriptures, which in more than a dozen places approves of good liquor, and if there's a few texts against it what's the difference, one is just as good as the other. Twenty years ago—and that doesn't seem very long—every parson, priest, preacher and bishop in the land would quote the text which says, 'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake,' in condemnation of any intemperate zealot; and Reverends, and Right Reverends, would drink and be happy and not be afraid; but now, Lord bless us, when a race of fanatical yelpers, wiser than Paul himself, who go about courting popularity, find that the plain text doesn't suit their new-fangled ideas, they will say it is a wrong translation or that it has some other meaning, or they will have it altered and revised to suit the occasion. I'm as good a Christian as any of them, and I have too much regard for the old Book—and I despise any man that doesn't regard it—to be tearing it to pieces to suit any or every so-called Reformer that comes along—they are nearly all rank unbelievers. Well Dan, as I was saying, here's old Shawn, a fine old Christian fellow, that can see farther than half your learned professors, a man that I have tried and trusted for years—and you know something of him as well as I do. Could it be possible to find a more faithful man, or a more Christian man, in Ireland?

No, nor in all Europe, Asia, Africa, or America—simply impossible, and I say it.”

To this Mr. Casey readily assented, and my father continued : “ I would trust you, Shawn, with wife and children, silver and gold, goods and chattels ; I have trusted you with everything I possess, and, up to this very identical moment, I have found you a true, faithful man, a genuine trump. Sit down, Shawn, sit down ; you musn’t budge out of this room ; by all that’s just, you’re good enough company for the Lord-Lieutenant himself.”

My father almost forced Shawn into a chair. The poor man had of course to submit. He smiled and uttered a few words which I did not catch, and then my father stood out before him and made this appeal :

“ Now, Shawn, you know me, and you know that brave, sterling gentleman in that arm chair, my noble, old, and highly respected partner, Daniel Casey. Is there another such man in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland ? I say no. For honor, and integrity, and true principle, there’s not one of his name, or of any other name, to be compared to him. Dan, my boy,” continued my father, directing his observations to his partner, and patting the bald head of Mr. Casey, “ you’re a brick, every inch of you. John Fairband and Daniel Casey, united we stand, divided we fall, that’s it. Fairband and Casey, that’s the firm, a firm pretty well known and respected ; and now I challenge contradiction, and I defy all the potentates and powers of the wide earth to deny that the success of our firm is almost entirely due to the splendid business habits and astonishing foresight of yourself alone. No, don’t say a word against this ; I say it and it is so. I put a trifle more money in the business than you did, but you had brains, and far more tact than I had, and any losses we suffered were more in consequence of my recklessness than anything else. They say

Irishmen are hot-headed and hasty, but Dan you're an Irishman; an honor to the land you live in; a rosy-faced, round-headed, bald-pated Irishman that's worth ten hundred thousand consequential cockneys. You're a cool Daniel, a calculating Daniel, a statistical Daniel, a Daniel that can see at once through the artifice of a Jew, the trick of a Yankee, and through the specious approaches of any pretender, be he English, Irish, Scotch, Portuguese, or Egyptian, or anything else. Daniel Casey, I say you're the Daniel of all Daniels, you're a noble fellow and an Irishman, and I'd like, for your sake, to be an Irishman also. I once was foolish enough to have a prejudice against any country but my own. That prejudice, I admit, appears occasionally. But here I am now with an Irish wife, and with Irish-born children, and with an Irish partner—Dan, your own blessed self—and last, but not least, here's my good old friend Shawn, from whom I have already learned much about men and things which is well worth knowing. Still after all," continued my father, having paused for a moment's reflection and being somewhat less excited, "the country doesn't make the man, but man makes the country. Some of the very finest parts of Europe are still populated by inhabitants that are comparatively rude and uncivilized; and here I must acknowledge that, crude as the notion might have been when it was first submitted, the idea of the alienating tendency of nationality was first suggested to me by this very unpretending Shawn, and it led me to conclude that, in reality, a country must be judged by its institutions, a people by their intelligence, and an individual by his integrity. Any land that is not generous to true liberty is at best nothing but a moral wilderness. During long ages the idea of nationality has been bolstered up by the high-sounding phrases of prominent men, but what after all is this glittering idea? nothing more

than the flash of the weapon that has kept the races of mankind asunder and made them enemies. There are characteristic features common to all men which prove that they are kindred, and this fact should not be superseded by an over-sentimental love of country. Nationality, I say, is only a delusion, one to which, like too many others under certain influences, I sometimes submit—a proof that the delusion is dangerous. It is the wedge which the oppressor and the aspiring have so far used successfully to divide and govern.”

Mr. Casey freely admitted this, and he stated that while at one period of his life he had very biased opinions regarding the people of other countries than his own, he felt gratified in being able to state that even in England, which was said to be the traditional oppressor of Ireland, he had found many warm friends who were incapable of interference with the rights or the liberties of others ; in fact some of the greatest advocates for genuine freedom that he had ever met were Englishmen. A man of any discernment need but travel very little to discover excellencies in other countries which perhaps his own did not possess. It was nothing to him where a man chanced to be born provided his heart was in the right place—that should be the proof of his worthiness. He could in all sincerity reciprocate the compliments so lavishly used by his good-looking partner, John Fairband. He considered himself most fortunate in having formed a business connection with a person so strictly honorable as he was, and that although they had occasional slight differences on some subjects—for who had not such at times ; even man and wife must have their disputes ; in fact it seemed to be a law of nature that there should be periodical turmoils. Yet, on the whole, he was most happy in the alliance he had formed with his friend Fairband, and he trusted that that alliance would long continue.

"Yes, my brave old boy," said my father starting up impulsively, "that alliance shall never be broken—never ; but, Dan, we shall yet have a closer one. See here," continued he, kissing little Jane who was near him, "look at this little beauty, this blessed little picture of innocence, with flaxen ringlets and cheeks like the veriest rosebuds, this little Irish gem bestowed on us by honest Dan. Who would not be proud of such a sweet little angel for a daughter? Now, Dan, what say you? We must have a closer tie between us—a kind of family partnership. I want this pretty creature to be *my* daughter also. I have my eye on her, and I shall yet want her as a mate for my admiral there," and he pointed to my brother, "and now, Dan, knowing your goodness of heart I'm sure you won't refuse."

A hearty laugh followed this proposal. Mr. Casey of course admitted that such a union would no doubt be an excellent arrangement. He would only be too happy to consent to its taking place when those most interested felt inclined.

I felt my heart beating wildly ; the color must have left my cheek. I tried to smile, but the effort was a sad failure. I looked at Jane. She was blushing, no doubt because she was for the moment the object of such special notice, but in haste I attributed her emotion to her feeling towards William, whom now all of a sudden I could not avoid detesting, and I felt myself madly jealous. I had just heard from my father's lips that which I never expected to have heard from him. I would a hundred times rather that he had had an angry dispute with his partner about nationality, or religion, or anything else, than that his heart should have become so softened as to almost urge an alliance ; for might not the result of his outrageous proposal be disastrous to my newly-cherished hopes. In fact I had scarcely ever before heard him say so much at one time or express himself so feelingly or rather so impulsively as to his

regard for others. On the contrary, he was too apt to try and suppress anything emotional in his nature, and to appear cold and unconcerned when in reality he was far otherwise.

He was just about to commence again at Mr. Casey for his indifference to a second matrimonial engagement, when Miss Burnett, evidently anxious to escape from another infliction, arose to go home. My mother, judging from appearances that it was better for her not to remain, did not press her visitor to stay, and as she had but a short distance to go, I left the house with Shawn—glad in fact to get away—to accompany Miss Burnett. He had not far to travel to see her safely housed, and on our return, having almost forgotten the cause of my recent vexation, I expressed the gratification I felt in seeing my father and Mr. Casey on terms so excellent, and for the genial feeling that had existed among all in the house during the evening.

“That’s jist as they should be, avick,” replied Shawn, “an’ that’s jist as they would be, an’ as a’most iv’ry one else could be, av other things didn’t come in the way to put ’em asunder. Your father has a’ready got one hand nearly out av the fetters ; he may at times overlook where a man chanced to be born, an’ admit that an Irishman may be jist as good as an Englishman ; he may do that, but his other hand is still iron-bound, you can’t get him to say that the Catholic tayches the truth, or that the Protestant can be in error ; an’ iv you want to banish pace and goodwill between a man an’ his wife, or child, or partner, or any one else, jist tell your father or Daniel Casey that his creed is false, an’ you’ll do it. Oyea ! shure I’ve seen enough av it. There’s men here around us, as there’s ivery place else—an’ women, too—who could dispise friend or brother, or even betray human nature herself, av you’d on’y watch fur time and opportunity an’ shout out one word—

‘Religion’—an’ that one word would set their brains on fire, an’ turn their hearts into stone, as it has a thousand times before. But you’ll remimber that that word wasn’t mintioned to-night, an’ for that very raison, may be, there was nothing but pace and friendship at home.”





CHAPTER XIV.

SABBATH LECTURES.

WHENEVER my aunt Catherine paid us a visit, and this was about once a month, she generally managed to be with us for at least one Sunday ; and on that day she was, I may say, nothing but the impersonation of religion itself. I often noticed her strictness and reserve at such times, and imagined that they must have made the Sabbath to her a kind of penitential day, as solemn and gloomy in many respects as Good Friday would be to a most devoted Catholic. From the manner in which my aunt took me in hand during her stay, it sometimes seemed to me as if she thought that extra exertions were necessary in my case, to keep me from the contaminating influence of popery. It was evident that she considered me in a dangerous position. Was not my mother one of the strongest believers in the Roman faith—one who mildly disregarded any argument against her Church ; were not my sister and Nelly Carberry, and, for all my aunt knew to the contrary, Shawn also, all of the same creed ; were not our visiting friends mostly Catholics ; and did not my uncle, my mother's brother, the priest, occasionally call to spend the day with us, and as my father was seldom more than once a week at our home in Cove, would it not, under such circumstances, be the easiest thing in the world to have my mind tainted with popish notions unless

unusual efforts were made by her to efface any impressions which might have been made on me in favor of the "Man of Sin?" She had every confidence in the religious stability of my father; she felt that his religious opinions were fixed and unalterable, and that I could be almost perfectly safe with him as even my sole religious guardian; but I am satisfied, however, that my aunt always suspected my mother of proselytizing tendencies; at least she had a very strong impression that one who was so ardent a Catholic as her sister-in-law, would never rest until she had, at least, her children within the fold. My brother she no doubt considered comparatively safe, as he was at school in the city; but in her opinion I was certainly in danger, and, like a good Protestant Christian woman, she considered it a duty of the first importance to keep me from being led astray from the truth, or inveigled into error.

"Oh," she would say to me, "be careful of what they tell you—don't believe a word they say about religion. Popery is a false system and the Pope himself is the 'Man of Sin.' See, I can prove it for you out of God's own Word;" and then she would read out a text which to her was a perfect proof of what she had assumed. "Just think of it, child, just think of these poor deluded people praying to saints and angels, and to the Virgin Mary, and then praying in an unknown tongue [she would give me another text] and believing in images and in relics, and in holy-water, and in crosses, and beads, and scapularies, and wax candles, and other nonsense; and then think of them going to confession to a poor sinful creature like themselves, and believing that he has power to forgive them their sins. I have but a very bad opinion of priests; they are a set of impostors who go about misleading poor ignorant people. I won't say that your uncle, your mother's brother, is a priest of that kind; but why doesn't he leave them? And worse than

all they believe in transubstantiation. Only fancy a man taking a wafer, made of a little flour and water, and then praying over it until he tells you it is God himself! I can't think that there's a priest on earth who believes in such arrant folly. Sure, my dear, the blackest idolatry that our missionaries in barbarous lands have to contend with is not at all equal to that. When the poor heathen makes a god he won't deny that it is of wood or of stone, and though he will bow before it and pay it offerings, he will even admit that its powers for good or evil are limited; but when a Catholic priest makes a god—and he may make half a dozen of them in the day—he and his people will not only bow before it, but will prostrate themselves in its worship, for it is according to him the very God himself, though thousands of them may be made by priests in all parts of the world—it may happen at the very same moment—and afterwards packed away in little silver boxes until they are required. What idolatry can surpass that?" My aunt would fortify her argument with text after text, until frequent repetitions of them from time to time made me as familiar with them as she was herself.

Ah me! how I used to dread a Sunday with my aunt. She had lived with us before she got married, and she used to have it all her own way as to my religious training, and since then she evidently claimed a right to control me on that day; and her discipline was certainly most wearying and despotic. My poor mother, I knew, used to pity me, but then she dared not interfere. Sunday was, at that unhappy time, neither to me a day of rest nor of recreation. Oh, how I used to envy the poor ragged little boys that I saw strolling through the fields or playing about on the highways! Instead of hailing the Sabbath with delight, I used to be glad when it was over.

The first thing I had to do on Sunday morning, even before

I took time to dress, was to read over the chapter of verses I had to learn out of the Bible, to be repeated in the afternoon at Sunday School. If the chapters were very short I generally got two of them to learn, as I had seldom less than thirty verses to commit to memory. In order to succeed in this I had to study them over several times on Saturday, the last thing on Saturday night before I went to bed, often in bed on Sunday morning, and then on until breakfast time; leaving me scarcely a minute to step outside to breathe the fresh morning air. In this way I had to learn hundreds of incomprehensible verses many of them similiar to those in Joshua, relating to "Hapharaim, and Shihon, and Anaharath;" "and Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez;" "and Remeth, and Engannim, and En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez." I had to study such as these until my head ached and my heart grew sad. If I had been required to learn a passage out of one of my story books, I could feel an interest in reciting something about Robinson Crusoe or any other legendary hero, but to be obliged to commit whole chapters of the Bible, that I could scarcely understand, or that sometimes led me to imagine God's peculiar people to be savage and inhuman, or that the Almighty himself was very stern and resentful, gave me a great dislike to the allotted task; and now, even to this day, I can scarcely look over a Bible without feeling a depressing remembrance of what its study once cost me.

Well, this Sunday in particular, my aunt, as if to make amends for her rather unusual levity on the previous evening, wore a saturnine expression of face, and made me rehearse before breakfast many chapters of the Old Testament in order to be able to repeat to her a number of verses that I had almost forgotten. She upbraided me for my neglect of this study, and hinted that if I became indifferent to the "blessed Gospel," or

allowed myself to be influenced by my mother, or any one else in the house, against the reading and study of the Scriptures, I should be sent away to school with William, and be kept more among my Protestant friends. As for William himself he was, she admitted, altogether beyond her control ; he was more like a scoffer than a Christian—these were degenerate times ; for scoffers, even among school-boys, were increasing—but she thought that my father would have much to answer for if our religious training was not more carefully attended to for the future.

“ Besides,” said my Aunt, “ you seem to spend most of your time with Shawn. Now, though I have, as you know, read the Bible to him many a time still I think my reading has had but little effect ; for so far as I can see he seems as deluded and as superstitious as ever. He is, like the rest of them, blind and obstinate, verifying the Scripture,—‘ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie,’ ‘ That seeing they may see and not perceive ; and hearing they may not hear and not understand ; lest at any time they should be converted and their sins be forgiven them.’ Yes, poor man, he’s degraded by his creed like the rest of the Irish Romans.”

“ I can assure you, aunt,” said I, growing interested in Shawn’s behalf and anxious to enlist her in his favor, “ I can assure you that your reading has had a great effect with him ; far more than you ever expected ; for he has asked me a hundred questions about things in the Testament ; he understands the meaning of much that you have read to him far better than I do. He has got me to look over books for an explanation of difficult passages, and now he is able to explain them to me himself. One thing I know, aunt, you needn’t be afraid to let me be with Shawn for he’s greatly changed, and I am certain that he is no more a Catholic than I am.”

In a moment my aunt looked at me in a state of joyful excitement, and brought her hands together with a loud clasp.

"Why bless the boy, is this so—is it true, is it true?"

"True," said I, "aunt." My face grew a little flushed, for I had now discovered that I had, by a slip of the tongue, not spoken the truth in saying that I was not a Catholic. "It's quite true, for Shawn does not believe in the Pope."

A most gracious smile overspread my aunt's face and banished every trace of her sombre piety. She was really delighted, and patted me on the head with tender familiarity. "I am so pleased, so delighted to hear this," said she, "even *one* to be rescued is a great satisfaction. If my humble efforts have brought him out of the pit and the miry clay how great is my reward! What is he, John? Can't we get him to go to meeting with us to-day—wouldn't he join a *class*?"

I ventured to express a doubt. "Well," continued my aunt, "he could go with your father and William to church; that would be something. What does he believe? Where does he want to go?"

I hesitated to reply. I knew that my aunt wished to learn from me what form of religion he was inclined to adopt; and what answer should I give? She noticed my hesitation and repeated her question. "Well really, aunt," said I, giving my reply rather reluctantly, "I don't think he believes anything at present."

"Oh, nonsense!" she exclaimed, a little petulantly. "He'd be worse than a fool not to believe something; of course he would."

"Well," replied I, feeling that I was treading on slippery ground, "he's not quite satisfied yet about many things in the Bible, and he want's to make further inquiries; that's all perhaps."

"What a simpleton!" she again exclaimed, "what more inquiries need he make? If the scales have fallen from his eyes, he ought to know by this time that the Scriptures are plain and easily understood, and that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. What does he want explained?"

"I think he has some doubts," said I, rather timidly.

She reflected for a moment or two, and then said somewhat complacently, "In fact he may possibly have some reason for these. When we discover that we have been deceived in any way by an old and long cherished friend, we are apt to be sometimes over-cautious and distrustful towards the new-comer; Shawn has just abandoned his old creed and is not too confident of the new one. But of what is he in doubt?" inquired she.

"Well," said I, not knowing but that she might be a little skeptical on some points herself—as I had heard Shawn say that many others were—"I think, aunt, he doubts the meaning of some things in the Bible."

"Oh, I can understand that," she promptly answered. "You know the meaning that we Protestants may give to a chapter or text—which of course is the true meaning—will be made to mean something else quite different by the Catholic priests; that's the way they build up their rotten system. In fact, I am sorry to say, that there is far too much disputation and wrangling this way even among Protestants; I am often ashamed of it. The Baptists will explain a text one way, and the Presbyterians another, and the Methodists will differ from both (though I think we're right), and then there are over twenty other different sects with as many different interpretations of passages which to me appear quite plain. Indeed, I know godly men who I fear would banish the Scriptures, or tear

the best commentaries to leaves, if they chanced not to coincide with their doctrinal views. Yet," she continued after a little pause, "I must admit with regret that on some of these very doctrinal points I feel a little astray myself, and am at times really perplexed as to how things are to be understood."

Feeling somewhat assured by this admission, I told her plainly that it was something more than the meaning he was in doubt of—that there were statements in the Bible which he did not believe.

"Not believe," said she with a look of amazement, and with an inquiring air as if her ears had deceived her, "*not* believe," continued she more emphatically, "pray what are the statements in God's holy word that he does not believe?"

I now saw that my aunt was a little excited, still I thought I would be safe in venturing an explanation; for I had often heard her boast that Protestants, and only these alone, allowed a man to reason and to exercise his own judgment on all things, especially on religious matters; and that he had a right to express his opinion freely. "I think, aunt," said I, with a slight entreaty in manner, "that Shawn does not yet—scarcely I think yet—believe that a—that the world was made in 'six days;' or that the whole earth was—was once drowned in a flood; or that a lot of animals ever went, that is ever went by themselves into the—the ark to be saved; or that Joshua—Joshua, you know—ever made the sun stand still; or that Jonah was ever swallowed by a whale—that is by a large whale; or that——"

"Stop!" she suddenly exclaimed, raising her open hand above her head. Her look appeared to be one of horrified surprise, and she seemed as if unable to articulate another word. "The deceitful, abominable old wretch! He ought to be——," she uttered these words at last with bitter deliberation and

then ceased, as if her words were insufficient to express her feelings. She seemed agitated, yet tried, I thought, to suppress to some extent, the angry emotion that partly controlled her. "And you've been day after day with this old—I won't say what," she continued, looking at me with the sternest expression, "listening to his treason towards God, and, evidently, with your mother's knowledge and permission. Pray does your father know what kind of a creature he harbors under his roof?"

"O aunt!" said I, in my most conciliatory manner, "pity poor Shawn. Ma knows that he has doubts and that he is not a Catholic, and of course she is greatly displeased that he has left his own faith. If you had not read so much to him, he might not have so many doubts; any way he might still be a Catholic; and perhaps you may yet be able to convince him that every word in the Bible is true."

"True? Of course the Bible is true; whoever would dare to say the contrary should be——. Any way, it is well known that none but bad, vicious, unprincipled men will say that anything therein—even a single text—is false; and no one who would make such an assertion should be trusted. 'Twould be far better to be even a deluded papist than to be a sneering infidel. You must have misunderstood Shawn, I scarcely think that he would have run from one extreme to the other so quickly. He is but a poor ignorant man, and very few indeed but the so-called scientists and philosophers would be unscrupulous enough to harbor such doubts."

I saw that my aunt was a little gratified to know that my mother was aware that Shawn had left her Church, and this had in a manner counteracted my aunt's resentment against him. "I won't say," she continued, after a little reflection, "that Shawn is yet actually vicious; you must have misunder-

stood him. I always took him to be simple-minded and honest, but you know he could not be such very long if he entertained doubts as to the truth of God's Word ; it would be virtually impossible."

I can still remember this conversation. I felt much concerned for poor Shawn, and little by little I got my aunt persuaded to feel better inclined towards him ; and better still I got her to promise that she would say nothing at present to my father on the subject, under the assurance that I would try to make Shawn as satisfied with my aunt's explanations of the scriptural difficulties that had beset him, as, I wished her to believe, and tried to believe, they were then to me.

During breakfast not much was said at table ; perhaps too much had been spoken the evening before. My aunt, though rather moody, was somewhat dignified in her manner towards my mother, and seemed to feel as if she had had a kind of triumph over her. My father complained of a slight headache, and while Mr. Casey was absorbed reading a newspaper, merely sipping his coffee and scarcely touching his toast, William and the girls sat together at the opposite side of the table—for I was kept close to my aunt—and were in deep confab and laughing as much as they dared to laugh in her presence on a Sunday morning. I could not help feeling a twinge of jealousy again. I had almost made up my mind not to notice Jane during the rest of the day, or at least to pretend to appear indifferent to her society, and, in this humor, after the meal was over, I had to get ready to go to Methodist meeting with my aunt. The first thing I had to do was, of course, to rehearse my long chapters—what a depressing task !—and while engaged at this my mother stole towards me and managed unperceived to whisper in my ear, "Remember, dear, to whom you pray to-day ; remember the ever blessed Virgin to whom I have

commended you. She will hear you, and watch over you, and protect you, and be with you even in the place where she is unknown, and among those who treat her with contempt."

My mother, Mr. Casey, Ellen and Jane went off together to hear mass at the cathedral. Ah, how I longed to be with them ! My father and William went to church ; and my aunt and I departed by ourselves for the plain-looking Wesleyan chapel—very plain to what Wesleyan "churches" are at present—she perhaps to pray for the conversion of deluded papists, and I to take up my cross and to pray in secret to—the Virgin.





CHAPTER XV.

AN APPLE OF DISCORD.

AS we passed the large church which my father generally attended I noticed a long row of stylish vehicles drawn up before it. There were coaches in yellow, blue, green, and dark brown panels ; and there were phaetons, chaises, and gigs of many colors, and all were polished and shining. Most of the sleek fat horses attached to these luxurious conveyances stood in drowsy magnificence under their costly harness and fanciful trappings, while others, as if anxious to attract attention, pawed the flag-way under them, or, one would think, kept tossing their heads with disdain at the meaner animals of their own kind that chanced to pass along the public highway. The coachmen in rich liveries, and fat as their horses, sat half asleep on their well-cushioned seats, or paced slowly backwards and forwards by the side of their vehicles chatting or joking with one another, or making themselves familiar with any of the smartly-dressed female servants who might linger outside the church door in order to secure an opportunity for such intercourse, as well as to exhibit their comely forms in perhaps the cast-off silk dresses of some lady of the house.

"Aunt," said I, as we were passing the church, "are not all these men breaking the Sabbath, though they are dressed in their Sunday clothes?"

"What men, child?" inquired my aunt; for she was going along with a downcast expression as if deep in the mysteries of some religious subject.

"Those stout-looking, red-faced coachmen," I answered; "Just hear how they laugh."

There was a loud laugh at something no doubt smartly said by one of the maid servants who were near by. "Oh, these men of course have to be with the carriages while their masters are at service in the church. It wouldn't do for them to leave the horses alone."

"But isn't that working, aunt?" I asked. "Don't these men have to clean the horses and carriages before they come out, and after they get back home again?"

"No, they are got ready on Saturday, I think," said my aunt, rather in doubt, "and there are other lower servants to clean the horses and things if necessary when driven back. Any way, you know, this is a work of necessity."

I was a little inquisitive, besides being a little annoyed at being led off alone by my aunt; and I also felt that while she was ready to make an excuse for these people, she was quite hard with others, and not exactly consistent with her general professions as to Sabbath-keeping.

"Then," said I, "these men are to mind the horses, and other men left behind have to clean them and put away the things and so cannot get out to church. Making a fire and cooking the dinner is, I know, a work of necessity, but driving about a grand coach on a Sunday, I think, is not. Couldn't the rich people walk to church as well as we, and keep all these men from working to-day?"

"They might, I suppose," said she, "but they won't. See there's the rector's gig, and there's his man near the horse's head, waiting to drive his master home after he's done preach-

ing ; and I know that sometimes in the city, when the streets are wet, the bishop is driven to the cathedral in his coach. In fact, wet or dry, he generally prefers coaching it, and so do his hearers ; those at least who can afford to keep servants in livery. This is a matter, child, that can't be helped, it has long been the custom, and if they do no worse than drive to church they do well ; besides more persons find employment."

"But isn't Sunday employment of any kind Sunday labor ? I've heard you say many a time that such labor is wrong ; that a man, no matter how poor, should not labor for hire, or gain, or reward of any kind on Sunday. Don't you remember, when you were here before, we saw a poor old man with a little basket picking up rags, and old nails, and other things here and there in the street one Sunday, and you know you got angry at him and told him he should be punished for Sabbath-breaking ; and when I pitied him—for he looked sick and hungry—and offered him my penny, you wouldn't let me give it to him, because you said he was doing wrong, and you made me put it in the missionary box in the chapel. Now, listen, aunt, you hear the organ. I heard my pa say that the organist who is now playing in that church gets—, oh, a great deal of money every year for playing during service, and that he is at the same time a Catholic, and also plays the organ sometimes in the Catholic cathedral. Isn't that earning money on Sunday ?"

My aunt, who used to like secular music before she became very religious, stood for a few moments to listen. I could have stood there much longer, as the performer was playing a voluntary of the most exquisite kind ; for in my confused, doubtful state of mind at the time, if anything could have made me feel really pious it would have been fine music. Indeed I have often thought that a grand choral service has much to do with making people religious ; and many ministers must think such a service

more effectual in this respect than their sermons, as the finest operatic singers are often employed to sing in churches. For while most of a congregation might think prayers, and vain repetitions, and sermons of even but fifteen or twenty minutes, very long, they will pray, or praise, or worship, or listen for hours, provided their worship can be translated to the heavenly throne in music ; for that must be the language of the celestial spheres.

"Oh," said my aunt, moving away again, "but that is Mr. Schwartz, and you know he's only a German Catholic."

"I know that it is Mr. Schwartz," said I ; "for you remember he used to come to our house to give Ellen lessons on the piano, and he comes now sometimes to tune it, and when he plays I think I could listen to him all day. But there's no difference between a German Catholic and any other Catholic, is there, aunt?"

"Not much, I suppose, if he's as bigoted as the Irish Catholics ; but they tell me the Germans are more like Protestants every way. If he plays for pay, it's his profession, perhaps his only way of making a living ; besides it's music in the service of the Lord."

"Then aunt," said I, "if it's right for Mr. Schwartz to make money the only way he can, even on Sunday, wasn't it right enough for the poor apple woman to try and sell fruit on the same day. It was her only way of making a living ; for I'm sure she wouldn't stand out so often in the wind, and rain, and cold if she could help it ; but you know, aunt, that you said she shouldn't be allowed to keep an apple-stand at the street corner on Sunday."

"Well, she should not," she rather sullenly replied ; "she might do better——," and just then we entered the plain religious edifice known as the Methodist chapel.

The place was well filled with decent-looking people, mostly, I should think, of the working class ; and by a few who kept small retail shops in the town. I scarcely noticed one of those distinguished individuals among the hearers such as patronize Methodism, and piety, and prayer-meetings at the present day, when Methodism itself almost scorns to be patronized, but would prefer to be considered attractive to saints and sinners alike, as being a kind of special agent, having at its command potential secular as well as divine influence. The preacher was one of the primitive style who was perhaps doubtful as to the legitimacy of any claim set up for him to the title of "reverend," and who had not yet developed anything of the clerical animus which might lead him to expect ever to be recognized as a "minister," any more than he would expect to have the meeting-house of his society called a "church," and to see it crowned, or decorated, or made more conspicuous with a costly tower or steeple. He was meek-looking in the pulpit, as the itinerant preachers of that day generally were; sleek hair, sleek close-shaven face, black or brown coat with standing collar and half-quakerish cut, and with a plain black ribbon to the plain silver watch which he scarcely ever exhibited before his hearers. The members of the society at that time would have considered it a great infringement of their rules to wear either gold or silver or costly array, and would have no more thought of presenting a favorite popular preacher with a costly gold watch and massive gold chain, than they would have thought of erecting a golden calf on the family altar. This would have been a conformity to the ways of the world which could not have been tolerated.

The man who has faith in his belief will be sincere in urging it on others, and will not be inclined to encourage hypocrisy ; and this man was sincere and energetic in warning sinners

against the wrath to come. His voice, which might be considered more powerful than his reasoning, proved not only the depth of his true feeling, but resounded all through the building, and to a considerable distance from it outside; and after he had spent about an hour in exhausting the subject of his text—which I cannot now remember—he commenced with fresh vigor and alluded to the famous religious discussion which was then taking place in Dublin, I think, between “Pope and McGuire” concerning the claims or pretensions of the Catholic Church, and the preacher followed by dealing his mightiest blows against the “Man of Sin;” and for some time longer he exhibited the iniquities and the infamies of popery, proving, I am sure, to his own satisfaction and to that of almost every one present, that it was a system hostile to revealed truth, and to the well-being of man; and furthermore he attributed the woes of Ireland to the prevalence of Romanism—it was he said a curse to any country in which it predominated—and he asserted that the agitation, the disturbances, the violence and the outrages that were almost daily and nightly taking place all over the country were entirely due to the machinations of the rebellious and unscrupulous priests of Rome.

The preacher had scarcely spoken these words before a stone came crashing through one of the windows, rebounding from the pulpit and striking some one of the congregation. Immediately after, another stone smashed a pane of glass close to where I was sitting and grazed the top of my forehead, slightly cutting the skin. The alarm of course was great; there were screams, and some women were I think fainting, and a number of men rushed out to arrest the papist outlaws—for such they were said to be—who were at once accused of this wanton villainy. But it was too late. The chapel was near the corner of a street, and there were narrow lanes near by, running off in

different directions, through which one might easily escape even at noon-day. Two or three rough-looking men were seen turning down one of these lanes, they were followed some distance but they succeeded in making good their retreat. Some street loiterers who no doubt had been attracted towards the chapel by the preacher's stentorian voice, had heard his heavy denunciations of popery, and took the not unusual method at the time of retaliating by the most ready way at hand against what was called the "long-faced swaddler and his groaning congregation."

I and the other person who had been slightly hurt were the objects of much sympathetic attention for a while, but when it was discovered that I was scarcely injured, and that no other attack was apprehended, my aunt led me out in order to return home. She probably would have remained to attend class-meeting were it not for what had happened, and I should therefore have had to stay in the chapel for another hour or so longer. When we got outside the door I saw a woman looking at me very sharply as if she was trying to recognize my features. At first I thought it was but a mere matter of curiosity on her part, as I was one of the persons reported to have been struck. I saw her speak for a moment to my aunt, and when she drew closer to where I stood, I fancied that I had seen her face before, and while she still gazed at me on the wide stone door-step, I looked up at her in turn and tried to remember where I could have met her, when it suddenly occurred to me that she was one of the strange women who were in the big room at the time of my baptism by the spectre-priest—this was what he was still to my mind. I noticed this woman in particular that day, for she was the only person among the strangers present that seemed to take any interest in my mother or myself during the ceremony, and, now that I recollected the circumstance, I was very

much surprised to see her in such a place as a Methodist chapel (she was probably astonished to see me there too), and to find that she was evidently well acquainted with my aunt; and before they parted that day I heard her say that as she had to leave home the next morning early, to be away for a week or longer, she would not be able to see my aunt until her return, or until my aunt paid us another visit at Cove, and before she took her leave she stooped and said in a kind of half-whisper, but which was distinct enough to reach my ear, "and then I shall have a little news for you."

Few persons would like to be kept in suspense for a week before they could hear that which they were most eager to learn; a week of such uncertainty would be a week of anxiety. Even the criminal whose sentence is deferred after his conviction, and who knows that punishment of some kind awaits him, counts the hours gloomy and the days dreary, and the nights wretched, that must elapse while in sad speculation, or in torturing apprehension, as to the kind or the extent of the legal infliction to which he may be obliged to submit; and it is quite probable that many a culprit would prefer to hear his sentence pronounced, and to know the worst immediately after his trial, than to be kept in harassing suspense as to the future. It is too frequently asserted, and I think with great injustice, that women grow more nervous and restless during periods of delay and uncertainty than men—their reckless accusers have much to answer for—but if women under such circumstances were to be judged according to the impatience exhibited by my aunt on this occasion, it might be said with some show of reason, that this assertion against the ladies was not altogether too strong.

My aunt was certainly very eager to know all, then and there, of what this "news" was; her friend could not say anything at that time. They must have a quiet evening together, and then

she should hear all. My aunt tried very hard to have her friend delay her departure for another day. She almost entreated her to remain, but when she found all unavailing, and that she would have to try and exist another week, at least, in total ignorance of what was to be communicated, she turned abruptly away and walked along, the picture of discontent; and, so far as I could judge, in anything but an amiable mood, or in what was said to be a Christian spirit.

I must confess that on my way home I felt a little uneasy about this recognition, and what this news was likely to convey; whether it would affect my mother, or Shawn, or myself, or any one in the house. I felt unaccountably suspicious of this woman that had looked so sharply at me, and that had made such a promise to my aunt, but I made no inquiry and said nothing to my aunt about it. I walked on almost mechanically and took hardly any notice of coaches, or carriages, or horse-men, or foot-men, or apple-women, or any thing else, but was busied with thoughts that brought me, somehow, more anxiety for my mother than for myself. What could all this mean? Why was that woman in the big room, and how did she obtain admittance on that occasion which we thought was to be so private? Why was she at the Methodist chapel, and how was it that she was apparently so well acquainted with my aunt, and evidently in her confidence? It was a mystery to me, and though I could not venture to speak to my aunt on the subject, I would have given anything I had for a satisfactory explanation. Being doubtful however of obtaining the information I required, I decided to make my mother aware of the circumstance on my return, in order that she might give it suitable consideration, and if possible be prepared for any result.

My father and William had hurried home from church and entered the house almost out of breath. Though I was found

to be alive and well my father became almost exasperated when he saw my scratched forehead, and thought of my narrow escape; for certainly had the heavy stone that had touched me been one inch more towards my temple, the blow would probably have been fatal to me. On their way from church they had heard the most exaggerated accounts of the attack on the Methodist chapel, and that, though the number of injured persons were yet unknown—some were said to be dying—my father had been told by certain excited persons, that I was borne out of the chapel fainting, the blood streaming from my wound, and that in all probability I could not survive the injury. My mother, Mr. Casey, and the girls entered the house soon after and were greatly excited, at least my mother and the girls were very much alarmed. They had heard in the street rumors of the disturbance, my poor mother was in a terrible state of anxiety until she saw me; and I noticed with peculiar satisfaction that little Jane's eyes looked red, as if she had been crying. At that moment my heart was wonderfully lightened. I forgot all about the dread secret I was keeping from my father, and which gave me so much concern lest it should ever be made known to him; every trace of jealousy disappeared, and for the remainder of the day I became more than reconciled to Jane, and I forgot, or at least I was totally disinclined, to show the least resentment towards my brother William.

By an unfortunate coincidence, the subject of the religious discussion between Pope and McGuire had also been mentioned that Sunday in other places of worship in the town as well as in the Methodist chapel. It might be said to have been the text of the sermons delivered in the Catholic cathedral and in the church where my father usually attended. In fact, this great theological debate was considered one of very great importance. It was the leading topic day after day in the

public papers, people spoke of their clerical champions at street corners and it had the effect of reviving in the minds of both Catholics and Protestants the old feelings of religious antagonism which for short periods might occasionally have been allowed to slumber. The priest in the cathedral spoke of the ancient faith—the true apostolic faith of Ireland—of the intolerance that had assailed it; of the brutal persecution of the faithful by an alien race; of the sacrifices that had been made for their Church by the poor oppressed people of Erin; of the determination of the clergy and people of the Green Isle to resist to the very utmost every Saxon interference with their ancient rights and privileges; and, above all, of their firm resolution to counteract the viper-like approaches of the host of mercenary hirelings of the pampered State Church, which not only extorted tithes from the Catholic peasantry, but also claimed to be the exponent of that medley of novel creeds called Protestantism—that seething mass of corruption—in any and every effort they dared to make in order to alienate, or proselytise, or tamper with the faith of the humble Catholic poor, by means of soup, or sausages, or tracts, or three-penny loaves. No; the true Irish Catholic, no matter how destitute, would rather starve on the public highway than become the victim of sanctimonious villainy that would rob him of his soul, and exclude him from Heaven; and in conclusion the faithful were urged to invoke the aid of the Virgin in behalf of the Rev. Mr. McGuire, the champion of their Church, in his efforts to refute the specious arguments of his opponent and to cause him speedily to retire from the arena of discussion in utter shame and confusion.

The clergyman in the Established Church alluded to the debate as one of vast importance at the present time, leading many to investigate more closely the aims and pretensions of a

corrupt system of religion, which, when its vicious sway was predominant, closed the Bible to man, erected the hideous Inquisition, and caused only social and moral devastation throughout Christendom ; and which had already done so much to degrade the great majority of the people of Ireland. That fearful ecclesiastical monster, the Roman Church, should evermore be kept in chains. The priests governed the poor credulous masses under their control with almost omnipotent sway, and what was the result ? The consequence was, that while the Protestant population of the country lived for the most part in comparative prosperity and content, and in obedience to the laws, the Catholics were trained by their priests to look upon the lawful authorities as being only aliens and intruders, and it cost His Majesty's Government more to keep down insurrection in this unhappy country than it did to preserve life and property in any other part of the Empire.

Much more was added, and of course both Catholics and Protestants left their respective places of worship with embittered feelings towards one another. How could it have been otherwise ? The religious teachers in whom they trusted had undoubtedly exaggerated actual facts—and these were unhappily bad enough—and had made appeals of so inflammatory a nature, that many on both sides imagined their own excited feelings to be the promptings of that mistaken spirit which was anything but the spirit of pity or forbearance.

After the first angry outburst made by my father on his return from Church we saw no more of him until dinner time. During the interval he must have vented his spleen against everything Catholic—Pope, priests, and people—in his usual unreasonable manner privately before my mother ; for when I saw her afterwards I noticed at once that the effects of her mental distress were sorrowfully apparent in her face ; she had

almost always to bear the brunt of his indignation against her religion when he became excited. During dinner, though he and most present made an effort not to introduce the unpleasant subject relating to the great religious discussion, I observed his stern manner and his cold civility to Mr. Casey, but when my aunt unfortunately alluded again to the attack on the Methodist chapel, and to my narrow escape, insisting that exemplary punishment should follow such scandalous rioting, my father, in spite of his efforts to restrain himself, made some hasty reply in support of her opinions. It was evident that Mr. Casey found it difficult to keep from making an angry retort, but he spoke a few words, bitter enough in their way, which I think satisfied us all that were he any where else at the time than at my father's table, his words would have been loud spoken and defiant enough to bring on something more serious than an ordinary estrangement between him and my father.

How wretched we all felt while partaking of a meal rendered innutritious by unhappy emotions, and how different were our feelings to what they had been on the previous evening. The girls and William and I hurried away from the table as soon as we could ; we seemed to have been equally depressed.

I cannot say whether the unpleasant subject was renewed after we had left the apartment ; my aunt would scarcely have remained silent. There were very probably disagreeable inuendoes, or an approach to an altercation of some kind ; for when my mother followed us, she told us with tears in her eyes that Mr. Casey, though intending to stay with us a day or two, had determined to take his departure and return to the city by the evening boat.

William and I went to the wharf to see Mr. Casey off. My father did not accompany us. I cannot say whether or not

he even took the ordinary leave of his partner. How my heart sank when Mr. Casey told us that Jane would leave us within two or three days ; he would have taken her away that evening were it not for the entreaty of my mother to have her remain ; and when I saw him waving us an adieu from the deck of the steamer, and going back alone, I thought of Shawn's words about the discord or the enmity that Religion could create, and I wished that Christians in Ireland could be as tolerant regarding creeds and religions, and forms of worship, as heathens and pagans are said to have been before they had heard of the "Gospel Story," or before Christian missionaries had ever visited foreign lands.





CHAPTER XVI.

THE PICTURE IN THE CLOUDS.

WHAT a solitary Sunday evening we had after Mr. Casey's departure! Jane, poor thing, though scarcely understanding the cause of our trouble, knew that she was soon to leave us and was greatly downcast. My dear mother retired to her own room—probably to weep. My father left the house and went off somewhere alone, and my aunt went to evening meeting. She would have taken me with her at any other time, but after what had occurred at the Methodist chapel that morning she perhaps thought it best to allow me to remain at home, and I was really thankful that she had shown me so much consideration; at least I gave her the credit of having done so. I think I never saw William so reserved. I thought it scarcely possible that he could lose so readily his sprightliness of manner and become so thoughtful, as if he anticipated trouble. Like Shawn, he no doubt believed that nothing caused so much dissension and bitterness as disputes on religious subjects. About dusk in the evening he and I sat outside with Shawn, who of course had heard of what had happened that morning, and knew why it was that Mr. Casey had left us, and in a little time, when William joined the girls who were alone in one of the rooms, I told Shawn about my aunt's female acquaintance that she had spoken to outside the chapel door, of what she had

yet to tell her on her return in a week or so, and of how I had recognized her as being one of the strange women who were present in the big room at the time of my baptism. I gave him the best description of her that I could, and then waited to hear his opinion.

He remained thoughtful, more so, I think, than I had ever seen him before. Upon his grave face there came a serious disturbed expression that almost alarmed me. "O Shawn," said I, suddenly clasping his hand, "tell me, tell me what you think? It must be something dreadful, you look so grieved."

"There's too much rayson fur it, *alanna*," replied he with unusual solemnity of manner. "I know the 'ooman yer aunt met; it must be Nancy Ferrin, one that goes sewin' and mendin' from house to house; one of these *shanachie*s that's fur iver *colloquein*', an' story tellin', an' tattlin', an' breedin' throuble betune friends an' neighbors. Yis, 'tis the prayin', wanderin' Nancy Ferrin."

"Well, and what else?" said I, eagerly, to Shawn, finding that he hesitated to go on; "Who is she?"

"What else, *avick*?" continued he. "She's one of thim poor, thin, raw-boned, unmarried craythurs that's very religious a' Sundays, that tayches in Sunday School, that hates the papists an' prays for their convarshun, that collects money fur wanderin' missionaries, an' that goes from doore to doore a' Sunday mornin's wid texts av Scriptur', an' tracts. I saw her once at yer aunt's house, an' I noticed her here one day talkin' to yer aunt whin yer mother was in town—'tis the very one. Shure she's not a bit o' feeling in her heart fur a papist, nor fur hardly iny one else, an' she'd do yer aunt's biddin', an' be a treacherous spy on yer mother—an' that's what she's been—an' she found manes to git into the big room an' saw what took place there, an' she'll tell all in a week, or sooner if she can,

an' 'twill come to yer father's ears, an' after that there 'ill be a storm an' maybe a sad partin' among the whole av us—Oyea !”

I spent a restless night. I lay awake for hours thinking of what had passed during a period of scarcely over twenty-four hours. What a happy little company we formed in the parlor on Saturday night ; how wretched we all felt about the same time on Sunday ! Visions of hope and happiness so suddenly blasted, partings to come, and the probability of a dreary future ; for was not Jane about to leave us. Still, though at any other time the idea of this particular parting might be almost unbearable, it was already overshadowed by my anxiety on account of my mother. The conversation I had had with Shawn troubled me very much, as from all I could learn from him this Nancy Ferrin was so given to tattle that it was quite unsafe to confide any matter to her which you wished to keep private. It had been asserted that if you wished to publish any scandal for the benefit of the whole community, all you had to do was to impart it confidentially, as it were, to her, and it was certain to reach the ears of all. She knew the history of nearly every family in town, and gossiping individuals who were craving to know something of the family history of those around them—particularly the domestic affairs of those above them in social position—had only to invite the garrulous Nancy to spend the evening, and, while the kettle was boiling, to say something about preachers, or preachers' wives, or chapel-meetings, or missionaries, and then quietly to change the conversation to home affairs, to learn all that she had to impart as important secrets.

My aunt must of course have been well acquainted with the pious Miss Ferrin's peculiarities, and having already had a hint that Nancy had news for her, I began to fear that she might

continue with us until her friend's return, even if it were to be for two weeks instead of one. It had been my aunt's intention to go back to the city with my father and Mr. Casey, but as he had left us so unexpectedly, and as my father might be in no hurry to meet him again after the unpleasantness that had occurred, there was a probability that both he and my aunt would remain at Cove until Miss Ferrin had returned, burdened with a secret, which, when revealed over a quiet cup of tea, might be fatal to the future domestic happiness of my mother, and which would convict me of the greatest duplicity towards my father. Oh, how I dreaded the very name of this pious detective. Even Nelly Carberry had heard of her, for when I asked Nelly, with apparent unconcern, if she knew anything of Nancy Ferrin, "To be sure I do," she replied at once, "she spends the half of her time going about from house to house collecting scandal—and money for missionaries; that's what she does; and Shawn can tell you more about her than I can."

For some reason, my father and my aunt kept together in one of the rooms during the forenoon on Monday. She was rather parsimonious at times, and accused my mother of being extravagant. Had they been consulting on family matters one would think that she ought to have been with them; but her presence seemed not to have been required. As it was, I could not avoid suspecting my aunt of having some design in view. Where religious matters were concerned she appeared to have a peculiar influence over my father, and he generally agreed with her, and submitted to her directions in this respect. My mother knew this to be the case, and felt that it would be quite useless to interfere between them, or offer any opposition with regard to suggestions my aunt would make concerning the religious training or education of my brother or myself. I had often heard my aunt say, that my father had done very wrong in even per-

mitting my sister to be a Catholic, that even now he should forbid her ever again to enter a popish place of worship. He should exercise his authority, and make her a Protestant. That it was a crime to allow such an ante-marital arrangement, as had been made as to the religion of his daughter, to exist, thereby imperilling the happiness of what she called "a precious soul," and although, on some account, she was never partial towards my sister, I think she could have been even affectionate to her had Ellen been brought up a Methodist, and been able to repeat a hundred texts, and a hundred verses of Wesley's hymns in the Sunday-school class, controlled, regulated and enlightened by the devoted Nancy Ferrin. Indeed, I had many a time heard my aunt assert, in the presence of my parents, that no matrimonial union between a Catholic and a Protestant could expect to bring a blessing; such unions had been a prolific cause of discord, and that that which created discord could not in the long run be anything else than sinful. She would even go further, and declare that ordinary business partnerships between Catholics and Protestants—such as existed between my father and Mr. Casey—were also wrong; and although admitting that a Protestant might not be far astray in purchasing his bread or his boots from a Catholic tradesman, yet, on the whole, judging by what she did herself, she thought it would be better, for instance, for a Wesleyan to deal exclusively with a Methodist baker, or butcher, or tailor, than to patronize others outside the household of faith.

Ah me! how much I have learned since as to the numbers that are guided by such absurd preferences. While the business of many a worthy man is allowed to languish, or while his fair claims are rejected because he is unable to subscribe conscientiously to Catholic or Protestant articles of religious faith, or to the political creed of those in power, the religious or political

charlatan makes his servile profession and becomes a man of wealth. Bankers as well as bakers, pedagogues and place-hunters, and above all politicians, seem to understand and to practise a judicious mode of conformity to the creed, political or religious, of the majority, or of the influential; and they are willing, either by a toleration almost equal to profession, or by the laudation or adoption of even a vicious principle, to cleave to that side which has the greatest number, in order to gain their point. As to the success as well as to the discredit arising from such subserviency, the many undeserving men patronized or thrust into office or placed into positions, great or humble, is an evidence of how effectually the time-server, either in religion or politics, can serve his own purposes and can become wealthy, or attain elevation or distinction, while the more able or the more honorable man has to remain humble or unknown.

While my father was engaged with my aunt I took the opportunity of speaking to my mother, and, in as few words as possible, conveyed to her the knowledge I had of Miss Ferrin and of her probable intentions on her return. I said I felt almost positive that the important news which she had promised to give my aunt must be that relating to my baptism in the big room. My mother, though greatly surprised at this information, received it calmly. She had an impression, she said, that sooner or later it would reach the ears of my father, and she tried to have herself prepared for the worst. She felt that she had done nothing wrong in performing this sacred duty on my behalf, that it was a most important obligation to try and place me within the ark of safety, and that she would gladly have had my brother also present were she satisfied that he would have regarded her wishes as I had; and though she had taken up her cross and suffered much on account of her religious belief, and had much domestic unhappiness from the

same cause, yet she could willingly leave us all and die in peace were she fully assured that my father, as well as all others near and dear to her, had been received, as I had been, within the bosom of the Catholic Church.

Having said this, she wept sorely, more out of real sorrow for my father's persistence in what she deemed a fatal error, than in anticipation of anything likely to happen from any disclosure which might be made by Nancy Ferrin. In aiding my escape from an heretical creed she had, she said, the comfort of an approving conscience, and she felt that even if persecution of any kind followed, she and I would be under the protecting care of the Mother of God. All would be for the best.

How many thousands in the most perplexed and harassing circumstances, or in the midst of dire distress, have looked up to the clouded heavens for hope, and when even the imagination had failed to catch the faintest gleam from the leaden sky—when all seemed dark and blank—the doubtful, throbbing heart would still try to feel confident while forcing the lips to mutter, "It may be all for the best." And when the almost despairing soul is ready to plunge into a gulf of despondency, this secret utterance of latent faith is heard as if it were the whisper of some guardian angel. My dear mother, who believed that a protecting spirit was ever near her, seemed to grow hopeful, while watching even its fancied shadow, and to feel reassured by the words she had just used; they were to her like a prayer that was certain to be answered, and that, come what would, the words of that very prayer should shine out in letters of light to let her see that—all should be for the best.

That evening I became aware, to some extent, why it was that my father and my aunt had been in consultation. It happened that I was the principal subject of their conference; for my father informed me, when we were alone, that he and my aunt

had come to the conclusion that I was now well enough to be sent to school. He had not yet decided where to place me; he intended, he said, to return on Saturday, and by that time he should perhaps be able to tell me how I was to be disposed of. He and my aunt would leave in the morning for the city; in the meantime I was to make such preparations as I could, and he would direct my mother to have everything ready, as he proposed to take me away with him next week.

This arrangement, quite unexpected by her, was a fresh affliction which she felt to be peculiarly severe at the time. But what could she do but submit again—every act of her married life had evidently been an act of submission. Were she to offer any opposition, it would only make my father, or rather my aunt Catherine, more determined to have me sent away, lest the supposed pernicious effect of my mother's religious teaching should, in the long run, be almost a calamity. She truly suspected the cause of my father's decision respecting myself, and then, when she came to consider calmly how excited he probably would become should he learn our great secret through Nancy Ferrin, she admitted it would after all be better that I should be away until the storm or the hurricane of his wrath had first been spent on her devoted head, and until she had had an opportunity of pleading in my behalf and of trying to prevent his anger or his fury from hardening into fierce or bitter enmity against me for ever. In all this she seemed to think but little how it was to result to herself.

My father and my aunt left us in the morning. William and the girls and I went to see them off. The day was chilly and misty, and we were glad to return to the house. Even if the weather had been beautiful, I was in no mood for an excursion; neither did any one else in the house care for leaving it; all appeared to be depressed. I felt great loneliness of heart,

for in less than a week I should have to leave my dear mother, and my sister, and Shawn, and Nelly Carberry, and the old house that I loved so much ; even the big room, in spite of the spectre-priest, and the rather unpleasant associations lately connected with it, seemed to have for me its wonted attractions as of old. William would very likely leave home with me, and we might probably be sent to the same school. I must leave these, and then I should have to part with another, with little Jane, one of the dearest friends I ever had. How could I leave my mother or Jane and be ever happy again until we were once more together ! And when was that likely to be ? Late occurrences seemed to loom up like mountains of difficulties before us. Sad as the thought was of being separated from my mother and my other friends, there was no doubt in my mind but that I should be able to see them from time to time ; but when again should we have Jane with us ? She had now been nearly six months a constant inmate, and during most of that time I had been her daily associate. Only two or three days ago she had almost ridiculed the idea of our ever being separated, and, in our inexperience of the trials of life, we had agreed to be always together ; but now, even in less than another day, there was to be a separation which might be for an interminable period, and which in all probability would make my future life, be it short or long, one of the dreariest imaginable.

Poor Jane appeared to be suffering herself from such reflections. I saw her lips tremble, and her eyes fill, whenever we alluded to her departure, and, as these allusions were of the most regretful kind, that peculiar languor and lowness of spirits which mostly precedes a parting of very intimate friends affected us all. William tried, in his usual way, to be cheerful, and my sister, who was really more affected than I had ever before seen

her, made repeated efforts to be lively, but all to no purpose. The hours passed slowly away, and as I turned occasionally to look at Jane, I could notice that she would gaze anxiously at one and then at another, as if to satisfy her longing eyes, the same as she would, had she been expecting never to see us again. I had not the heart to be jealous so far during that day. I saw her look repeatedly at my brother; the shade of sadness in his young face made him look more interesting, but my heart somehow told me that it was only a sister's look she gave him, nothing more; for when she turned her eyes on me, which she did very often, I noticed a tenderness in them which, at that particular time, I tried to believe was an indication of something stronger than a sister's affection. It might have been a very silly notion of mine, but, nevertheless, young as I was, the notion impressed me, and it was my greatest happiness then to indulge it.

We had an early tea that evening, for the weather had cleared up and we were anxious to go out once more together. While we sat at table, William tried to amuse us by telling us some of his school stories, and afterwards he looked at the grounds in our tea-cups and pretended to tell our fortunes. Jane was to be married to a rich sea-faring man or traveller. Did he mean himself? How soon I could be jealous again! Ellen was to become a nun. This she said never would be, and she called him a false prophet. I was to be a preacher, and should cross the sea as a missionary. When I saw Jane's eyes turned inquiringly on mine, I repudiated my brother's skill as an oracle, and declared I should never enter a pulpit. "Pulpit or not, then," said he, "you will be a missionary—I cannot say of what kind." And Nelly Carberry, who was present, and who poured out some tea for herself, was to be married to a sailor within a year.

The girls laughed, and we all congratulated Nelly. It was the first laugh we had had that day ; and, to prolong the diversion from gloomy thoughts, I suggested that Nelly, who was better skilled in this method of foretelling than any one present, should look into my brother's cup and tell his fortune. Nelly, smiling, took the cup and turned it in hand two or three times ; not satisfied apparently with what had been revealed, she turned the cup again and again, and remained silently gazing into it, so long, indeed, that she seemed to forget that there was any one present. A serious expression grew upon her face, she seemed nervous, and as I had no faith, even then, in this particular kind of nonsense, which I knew had imposed much on her credulity, I almost startled her by crying out suddenly—"What do you see, Nelly?" She did not reply at once, and I repeated my question. "I can't tell you," she replied, in rather a feeble voice, "I'll never tell."

"Oh bother!" said I, in a light kind of way ; for I wished to reassure my mother, who seemed to have been impressed by Nelly's manner more than any one else present, "you have nothing to tell that we are afraid of. If you fancy you can see shrouds and coffins, or skulls and bones, it is only fancy. Neither you nor any one else can tell by looking at the stars, or by looking into cups, or by pretending to deal with spirits, what may be in the future ; it is all only silly guess work—just what Shawn says of much that is called prophecy. Come, tell us, Nelly, why you look so very grave—there's nothing in it."

"I see neither skulls nor bones, nor anything of that kind," said she, still looking into the cup ; "but what I see here now I shall never tell."

Just then my brother made a sudden dash across the table as if to snatch the cup from her. She held it tightly, and before he could twist it out of her hand, she thrust her fore-finger into

it, and disarranged the fancied map of futurity formed by the tea-grounds.

We laughed again at Nelly's dexterity and at William's discomfiture. He laughed as heartily as we did, but Nelly's face was unusually grave; and my mother did not even smile. She appeared to be like one who had a belief in this kind of revelation, and who had, years and years ago, tried this method of foretelling, and that time had to some extent proved its truth.

In a few minutes we forgot for the present all about the predictions, and we left the house to ascend the hill beyond the cathedral and to look down upon the harbor and its surrounding scenery. My mother and William and Ellen walked together, and Jane and I followed. Ah me, though the evening sun was still shining on the waters, and the deep blush in the west was like the roseate entrance to Paradise, there seemed after all to be a shade of sadness upon every object on which we looked, as if even the inanimate trees, and houses, and hills, felt that we had come out to take a parting look, and that, ere another sun-set, we—that is, Jane and I—should not be here together to see them. I had this impression, and my heart was so full that I could scarcely speak. We walked on slowly, and in the stillness of the hour, I could hear my brother's voice and his occasional laugh, as if he were trying to make my mother feel how little he thought of Nelly Carberry's fortune-telling, and that he was anxious to show how little apprehensive he was as to anything in the future regarding himself or any of the family; and then, when there came a hush, the farewell notes of some lonely bird, heard at intervals, was a kind of melancholy warbling in unison with my own feelings. Jane spoke at last, and said:

“When shall we be here again? Oh, I am so sorry I have to go away!”

"We thought only the other day," said I, "that we should always be together. You said we should, but how soon we have to part."

"We were both mistaken," she added; "but you will be sent away, maybe far away, and you will see strange people, and maybe you will soon forget me."

"I shall never forget you, Jane," said I, "so long as I live; but if half of what Nelly Carberry told us this evening turns out to be true, you will get married to some one else."

"No, I shall not, John," she replied; "though your pa said I should have William—and I must say that I like him very much—I shall keep my word and marry you first."

"First!" How the word grated on my ear! Still I knew that Jane, in her simplicity, knew nothing of what such an expression might be made to convey beyond her own innocent meaning. However, this, "first," and the last—her admission of how much she liked my brother—fully awoke my dormant jealousy, and I began to feel wretched again.

"But you will go away," she continued, "and may not come back until you are a great big man; and then, maybe, you won't know me."

"I shall know you, and speak to you, and ask you to remember your promise," said I, looking fondly at her; and then I gave her every assurance I could of my constancy while I should be at school or anywhere else until we met again—even if it were for years.

Indeed, within the last two or three days, since she had learned that we were all to be separated, I had an impression that she appeared more mature and thoughtful, and I imagined that the first traces of care could be seen on her innocent girlish face; as if she had but just had her earliest glimpse of the mutability and uncertainty of human affairs.

We walked hand in hand a short distance farther, until my mother told us it was time to return. But the evening now seemed so still, so beautiful, and yet so sad, that we all, I think, felt disinclined to leave the spot which was now so attractive. We still lingered, looking at the magnificent sunset. The heavens seemed all aglow in the red light, and Jane, having pointed upwards, called my attention to a beautiful cloud picture. In the distance there appeared to be a shining river winding among hills, and then flowing slowly onwards through fertile valleys, with tree shadows visible on its margin; then it reached a placid lake, whose bright surface was studded with numerous little islands which were crowned with foliage of rainbow hues, flinging long lines of coloring here and there across the transparent water. Afar there loomed up a shaded mountain, still and solemn in the day's decline. And then, when the ruddy light faded into dimness, we could notice what looked like little boats leaving the twilight shore and moving out across the hazy liquid surface as if to reach the spot where the last lingering sunbeam had disappeared. To us it was like a supernal vision; and now we all seemed loth to leave this Patmos-like place, as if expecting some revelation. But we had nothing further. We waited in the calm night, until river, and lake, and island were lost to view; we waited until the dark mountain was removed; we waited until the stars came out, and until the heaven of our imagination had faded entirely away.





CHAPTER XVII.

PLOTTING AND TATTOOING.

I LEFT the house by the dawn. I went out under a clouded sky, for I wanted to be alone, and, as I thought that there was no human being from whom I could now expect sympathy, I did not ask even Shawn to accompany me. I could not stay to see Jane depart. I could not offer her my hand and say "fare-well" without thinking of what a terrible meaning that word might convey and bursting into tears, and I could not bear to have others, were it even my mother or my sister, and above all my brother—whom I was at present desirous of avoiding—to witness an emotion which might betray the real state of my feelings. Of course I knew that inquiries would be made for me, and I felt that Jane would be greatly disappointed in not being able to see me before she went away, but I told Nelly Carberry to make some excuse so as to relieve them from any uneasiness at my absence, and I trusted to be able to have some opportunity by letter or otherwise of offering an explanation or an apology to Jane for my seeming coldness or indifference at the very time when I should be expected to exhibit anything but apathy at her departure.

The boat for the city was to leave at nine o'clock in the morning. My mother and my sister were to accompany Jane a few miles up the river, as far as Monkstown, and William

went for a few hours' visit across to the island. I sat for hours alone, like one in despair, looking down moodily upon the waters that were to bear away from us all the little companion who had already added so much to my happiness. I thought of her tender care during my illness, and of her kind, gentle, and sisterly attention to me at all times, and of how dreary the whole world, as well as my own heart, must be without her presence. At last I saw the steamer move away. I dared not wave my cap or make the least signal, but I watched the boat, as if with the most stolid indifference, until she rounded a point and became lost to view; and then, when I could see nothing but the long, dark line of smoke that she left behind, my breathing became heavy, my eyes filled with tears, and there alone, with none near me and none to see me, I wept, I think, as I never wept before.

I was glad to meet Shawn again. He seemed to detect that I was in very low spirits, though I am sure he knew nothing of the real cause. He made an endeavor, in his own way, to cheer me up and make me feel more hopeful. In my ordinary troubles I had always made a confidant of him, but now, as I could not tell him the real cause of my depression, he of course assumed it to have arisen from other late occurrences, and perhaps solely in consequence of the certainty of our soon being separated; and what he then said to me related entirely to these matters.

After having conversed for some time, I reminded him that he had made a promise to tell me something about my Aunt Mary, and in order to while away the hours until my mother's return, and as this might be the most favorable opportunity we should have for a long time, he readily agreed to give me something of her history. We retired to a quiet place overlooking the harbor, and though I cannot now give his own words, his relation was substantially as follows.

Monkstown is a picturesque village, or rather a pleasant watering-place, situated on the west side of the Lee, not far from Cove. The scenery on both sides of the river from this little resort to the city of Cork, is said to be as beautiful as any to be found in Ireland. Even some of the many once disdainful Englishmen, who could see nothing worthy of any particular admiration in anything Irish, had been forced to admit, with other strangers, that Nature here has been most lavish of her charms, and that to the eye of the poet or the painter, the succession of exquisite landscapes that can be seen from the harbor to the city is pregnant with inspiration.

The Kittson family was one of the most respectable in that old neighborhood. For more than a century some of its members had been included among the leading men of the place; and if one of the principal family failings—judging from a strictly Protestant point of view—was, that it remained “Catholic,” this alleged blemish was mostly overlooked from the fact, that old and young of the same family connection were accounted the most hospitable, as well as the most charitable, in the parish; and that while the men of that name were able, sturdy, resolute and dignified, its female members were perhaps the most beautiful and accomplished, and the admitted exemplars of every womanly virtue.

Shandon Villa was one of the most pleasant and conspicuous residences in Monkstown. It was situated on elevated ground, sufficiently high to enable its inmates to overlook the estuary of the Lee and to see large ships at anchor, or smaller vessels pass up to the city; and ships and craft of almost every kind course downwards towards the sea. There were flower-beds and a lawn in front of the house, and behind there was an extensive orchard; and there was a conservatory filled with more than the usual variety of rare plants. Taking the place

and its surroundings, it was on the whole as pretty a picture of a little rural paradise as one might reasonably require. The owner of the villa at that time was John Kittson, the father of my Aunt Mary. He was a magistrate for the County—one of the lately appointed Catholic Justices who, since the passage of "Catholic emancipation" had been favored by an elevation to the Bench—but knowing little about law, never having had a suit with any one, he never sat on a "case" or imposed a fine, and the only magisterial duties he ever performed were to attend occasionally a petty sessions, or a meeting of Justices—more in order to try and serve others, or to lighten the burdens of the poor, than to exhibit authority—and to sign J. P. after his name to such decisions or documents as met his approval.

As Mr. Kittson had a handsome income, he was enabled to welcome many friends, and he was hospitable almost to extravagance. His entertainments, though not what could be called costly, were frequent, for scarcely a day passed without one or more guests being seen at his board. He cared not for race or for country, his visitors were of a varied class, and priests, parsons, lawyers, and officers of the army and the navy, let them be English, Irish, or Scotch, or of any other nation, were sure to meet with a ready welcome, and his greatest happiness seemed to consist in making all feel thoroughly at home. Mrs. Kittson was fully as hospitable as her husband, and though the potations of the host and his guests—clerical as well as lay—might sometimes be esteemed rather heavy, yet it must be remembered that forty or fifty years ago, before ever Father Mathew established a temperance society, whiskey punch was accounted the proper, harmless, and necessary beverage which should be liberally imbibed, between the hours of ten p.m. and two a.m., in an Irish gentleman's house, and Mrs. Kittson, having a full knowledge of this social custom, and being per-

haps impressed to some extent in favor of its necessity, seldom gave her husband more than a mild reproof, finding it requisite, in a measure, to overlook the occasional irregularities which might arise from a practice tolerated in the best Irish society, and which after all was esteemed not only a benevolent usage but, on the whole, almost religious; a practice too, which while sanctioned in a certain degree by the presence of the clergy, must, she also thought, have been commended by them in a quiet way, as giving to strangers the best and most legitimate evidence of what a whole-souled Irish welcome could be; and that which a priest of her Church could approve of, even in this respect, was not only a law unto her as hostess, but also to the host himself.

Notwithstanding that Mrs. Kittson and her husband were highly esteemed, and that an invitation to their hospitable home could not be overlooked, yet the principal attraction of Shandon Villa to most of the younger visitors was their beautiful daughter Mary. She was then in the bloom of womanhood, the eldest of three children, my uncle William being her junior by about two years, and my mother being still younger. Many were of course prepared to pay Mary Kittson great attention, and more than one was becoming almost devoted to her, but among her admirers no person was so much struck by her charms as Henry Ambrose, the only son of a very particular old friend of Mr. Kittson, who lived but a few miles distant. This young man was a person of fine appearance and of a joyous disposition. He was highly educated and possessed of great natural abilities. His worldly prospects were very good, and better than all, at least in the estimation of Mary's parents, he was of a good old Catholic family, and this alone, to a mother anxious to find a suitable companion for her daughter, was the most powerful recommendation in his favor. Henry and Mary

seemed to have been adapted for each other by nature, their ideas on most subjects seemed to have been cast in the same mould, and as their feelings of affection were undoubtedly mutual, in due time it came to be understood by nearly all that Henry Ambrose was the accepted suitor of the beautiful Mary Kittson, and few could doubt that the union of two such persons could be anything else but eminently happy.

As for Mary Kittson herself, unlike most other young ladies in her position, she exhibited no inclination to appear as if it were a matter of indifference to her whether Henry cared for her or not, on the contrary she felt proud of his attachment and never appeared so happy as when he was near her; and it was evident that on his part he thought life itself would be bleak and worthless were he to be deprived of the object of his strongest affections. Every moment he could spare was spent in her society, and Mary ever greeted him with a voice which he heard with delight and which he no doubt considered as being equal to the most rapturous music. They could often be seen together in quiet places at evening time. They walked, arm in arm, through shaded lanes, or sat listening to the lulling murmur of some clear running stream, and dreaming of a happy future. They wandered with happy thoughts through fragrant fields, or looked down from some green hill on the picture of Paradise, which the earth, while decked in its summer flowers, seemed to form, never suspecting that any envious or malicious being could enter that elysium of their hopes to try to rob them of their promised happiness.

Some months had already passed away during the period of this delightful intercourse. All in the neighborhood seemed to take it for granted that nothing but death could prevent the union of the two young persons; even the rumour went that a day had already been fixed upon which the marriage ceremony

was to take place, and this came to be spoken of so often, and among so many, that scarcely half-a-dozen people had any doubt as to the certainty of the alliance which should be formed between two of the most distinguished Catholic families of Monkstown and its vicinity.

About this time another visitor came to Shandon Villa. He was specially introduced and highly recommended to Mr. and Mrs. Kittson for his great piety and distinguished learning. It needed, however, no very formal introduction to win for Father Gabriel the warmest welcome. He was one of the active, industrious priests of the Society of Jesus, who evidently had the motto of his order, "*Ad majoram Dei Gloriam*," imprinted on his heart, whose life had long been devoted to the service of the Holy Father, and whose sole object in living seemed to be to extend the power and influence of that great spiritual Head throughout the world. He also appeared especially desirous of winning favorable opinions of the True Faith from among those who were not known as Roman Catholics, or at least from those who had not been regularly baptized as members of the Church of Rome. For he used to assert that the True Church claimed all, and had a right to do so, let them be of what creed they might. Those, he would say, who were nominally out of the fold were only so through ignorance, or through circumstances over which they had had no control, and that none were therefore ever rejected or abandoned by the supreme Bishop but those who having once been made aware of their claim to be included among the flock of Christ, pertinaciously rejected their right to membership, or despised the authority of the Holy Pontiff, or persecuted him or the faithful under his excellent and legitimate domination who by divine right had a claim over all.*

* "The Catholic Church teaches that there is no salvation out of the True

Father Gabriel soon won golden opinions. In manner he was courteous and dignified ; in personal appearance distinguished and commanding. He was about the middle age of human life ; he was tall, his head erect and partly bald. It might have been that almost constant study had obliged him to wear spectacles, yet these seemed to add to the cast of his ecclesiastical character ; and the intellectual expression of his face was apparent at a glance. He had, however, strange gray eyes, which at times grew rather cold and stern, especially during discussions on theological subjects which he seemed willing to encourage occasionally, and though while engaged in a debate he would become a little impatient and rather arrogant in assertion, still on the whole he was considered an affable gentleman, who claimed to be very impartial and tolerant, and who was capable of winning the confidence of most persons. Added to this, his varied attainments gave him a kind of authority. All readily deferred to him as being a man of great talents. Even the haughty aristocrat, or the self-sufficient, who might fancy himself superior to others by right of birth or position, often becomes, as it were, instinctively respectful, or almost submissive, in the presence of one possessed of great gifts or of great natural

Church which is the Catholic Church, therefore there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. That is what we Catholics teach and profess. But there are many that belong to the Catholic Church without knowing it. For instance here is a good honest Presbyterian ; he thinks he is right. He has no doubt on a subject in observing the law of God. He confesses that if he knew he was wrong he would abandon his errors ; he would embrace the truth. Now that man belongs in soul to the Church—the man is before God a Catholic although externally he is not united with the Church. He is a real Christian, for, as I said before, if he knew his error he would abandon it and he would embrace the truth, no matter what it should cost him. Such a man we look upon as being on his way to the Church and we hope such a man God will save. But if a man knows he is wrong and yet is not willing to abandon his errors, what right has he to be saved ?" (Extract from a sermon entitled, "The Catholic Church alone True—The Church, not the Bible, the Rule of Faith," preached in Brooklyn, N.Y., by the "Great Jesuit," the Rev. Father Damen. Republished from the *Irish World* by the *Montreal True Witness*, June 27th, 1873.)

genius. Nothing seems to reduce personal vanity to its actual value, or to show the comparative worthlessness of too many of our social artificial distinctions more readily than their contrast with the mental excellence of high intellectual endowments often possessed by men of even low caste. Though some will pay an outward obeisance to the spurious or the pretentious, yet due respect is ever felt for that which is innate over that which is accidental; the pure, natural gem has a worth far beyond that of the factitious bauble. Still there can be detraction; for jealousy alone can affect to see no brightness in a star, or feel no warmth in a sunbeam.

Father Gabriel had power over others in consequence of his very extensive knowledge. He could converse fluently in several languages. He knew Latin, and Greek, and Hebrew; he could hear the dying confession of an Italian brigand, and promise him the pardon and consolation of the Church in his native tongue; he could recite spanish verses to a Castillian maiden; he could repeat choice quotations from Shakspeare in English, or give selections even from Voltaire in French; he could edify the German with some of the finest passages of Goethe or Schiller, and astonish wild tribes by inspirational utterances in their strange vernacular. He was a philosopher, a metaphysician, and he seemed perfectly at home in scientific matters. He was a skilled musician; he delighted in the fine arts, and was altogether a rare virtuoso. He was not one of the dilettante, or a mere dabbler in poetry, or painting, or elegant literature, but he was, or seemed to be, profoundly learned. As for history, he had it at his finger ends, and, therefore, with a memory that never failed, but was like a fountain of knowledge ever flowing over, he could in a peculiar way turn in a moment the argument of an adversary aside, brush away his fortress of cobwebs, and, almost without an apparent effort,

confuse or dismay an opponent, and then stand before all triumphant, exhibiting the fair proportions of his ideal of truth, and contrasting it with the deformity of the error which he seemed to have exposed.

Over certain minds such a man has great control. Mrs. Kittson, who was a most devoted believer in the supereminence of her religious creed, and who fancied that a Catholic priest was a kind of superior being, regarded her clerical guest as if he were already a saint, and she treated him with a veneration that might almost be called superstitious. Mr. Kittson, who had also a great and profound respect for the clergy of his Church, and who in an especial manner considered the priests of the order of Jesus as being the foremost champions of the Catholic faith, submitted to Father Gabriel in nearly every particular; and it was soon apparent that the priest's influence at Shandon Villa was almost unbounded.

Another visitor soon came. This was a Spanish gentleman named José Reig, a widower, and a very particular friend of Father Gabriel, who generally addressed him as Don José. The Don quickly became a favorite, at least with the host and hostess. He was a brown-faced little man, with smooth, black hair, and with still darker eyes, which had a kind of peering expression, as if they wanted to pierce you through and through. He seemed to have a proneness for discovery, as if he had a mission to search and find out the secrets of others. He could glance at one furtively and askant, leading a person to feel that the Don had his suspicions and was about to report to the Inquisitor-General. Anyway, the new-comer, though very peculiar in manner, could be exceedingly bland at times. He was reputed wealthy, and very pious, so much so indeed as to lead some of the knowing ones to assert that he was neither more nor less than a lay brother of the same plotting and

designing order to which Father Gabriel belonged ; an order which, it is alleged, are capable of avowing any principles, or of making the most unnatural sacrifice to benefit their great spiritual prince, the vice-gerent of Christ.

Be this as it may, the priest and he were on terms of the greatest friendship. The Don was not only the friend of the priest, but also one of the most self-sacrificing friends of the Church. His munificence was said to be almost unbounded ; a great portion of his wealth being annually placed at the disposal of his Holiness for the propagation of the true faith. By genuine Catholics, such as Mr. and Mrs. Kittson, the Don could not therefore fail to be regarded as one of the most estimable characters, and every way worthy of very distinguished attention.

It is said that after a man has been thoroughly tattooed, the forms of anchors, of crosses, or of crowns ; of saints, of angels, or of fiends, pricked into his skin, are indelible and can never be eradicated. It may take days or weeks to complete the operation, which in most cases is very painful. It is almost always performed in youth, the patient being generally a voluntary sufferer. Though the figures or symbols may at first appear unsightly or repulsive, yet, in course of time, he who has submitted to the operation becomes familiarized to the marks which he bears, and the form of the dragon or twisted snake, upon his arm or his breast is afterwards exhibited as a token of distinction.

There is also another mode of tattooing whereby only the moral features of a man are impregnated and stained. And while the first form is more generally resorted to by barbarians in the South Sea Islands, the other is practised among certain civilized people. The Jesuits, a learned Christian brotherhood, are the greatest adepts in existence at this. Their mode is to

tattoo the heart of living man, thoroughly changing his disposition and affections, imprinting their own distorted symbols of right or wrong, and making him—who might otherwise grow up comely, guileless, and innocent—to degenerate into a wily casuist, subtle, unfeeling, and remorseless.

The art of tattooing is an ancient practice which was followed by most nations ; and though the Jews were forbidden to disfigure their bodies in this way—"Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you," Lev. xix. 28—yet, at the present day, religious teachers, as well as others, seem to consider the art indispensable to their success, even while many of them scorn to be identified in any manner with the Jesuitical brotherhood. The art has now been brought to perfection. Avoiding the old painful process, anæsthetics are used with the young and susceptible, and while these are in a semi-unconscious state, the professor gradually imprints his own peculiar symbols upon the head or on the heart, and when the patient awakes, as from a pleasing dream, he is led to believe that the marks which are apparent, or the inclinations which control him, are simply his own improved natural developments. The men of fixed ideas, the non-progressive, the plodders along old muddy broken-down thoroughfares, the men who sit stupified in the sunlight, and who blink at the feeblest ray that may chance to illumine their mental gloom, are the very men who were the most thoroughly tattooed in their early days.





CHAPTER XVIII.

DELUSIONS AND DECEIT.

EVERY man deals with some delusion as if it were a reality. The most clear-sighted who has all confidence in his own unaided vision may, nevertheless, have some mist before his eyes which he cannot see, and he may have walked along all his life time in a shadow without ever once suspecting that it was not the clearest sunshine. The isthmus which fancifully connects the material world with some vast cloud-continent beyond is a mirage near which so many fondly linger, as if looking midway from the seen to the unseen, or wavering in doubt as to the proper choice between that which is real and that which is imaginary.

Delusions affect families, communities, and nations, as well as individuals. We have families full of silly pretension as to their lineage, which boast of their "blue blood" derived perhaps solely from some progenitor who was a successful knave, and then, overlooking their ignoble origin, foolishly fancy themselves superior to those around them. We have communities—especially the religious ones—which claim authority to dictate to all others, exhibiting contempt, or even hatred for those who dare to differ from them; and imagining that some ecclesiastical structure which they may have raised is founded on a rock of truth, while in reality it is but a glittering vanity elevated

upon a mountain of error. And there are nations which vaunt of their liberty, their wealth, their power and their civilization, while they may have partial laws, despotic rulers, unjust distinctions and privileges, and a large ignorant pauper population; and while professing to uphold freedom and humanity, may connive at oppression, and be barbarous in resentment.

Men in fact can be seen in every direction dallying with delusions and following shadows. There are none so positive as those who are but half right; and, with this possession, it is almost impossible to convince them that they are wholly wrong. Upon half-righteousness has been established wholesale iniquity; and as the fanatical are but midway between virtue and vice, the world has had to suffer bitterly from the wild excesses of zealots.

No delusions impose upon mankind to such an extent as those which arise from extraordinary religious fervor; and whole communities may be thereby affected. The Jesuits, perhaps above all others, offer an example of what uncontrolled enthusiasm can lead to, for in satisfying their religious yearning they suppress almost every human impulse, and, are fully of the belief, that in order to do their duty and fulfil certain extraordinary religious vows, they must subdue natural affections, they must cheerfully take up the cross laid before them, leave parents, brethren and friends, with the greatest indifference, and, without the slightest murmur, go to the remotest part of the earth as teachers or missionaries. No other society, secular or religious, demands such prompt obedience and has such mute submission. No dread of personal suffering must alarm them, and no thought of self must ever interfere to prevent a ready compliance with the demands of a superior. And yet, though feared and distrusted by Catholic and Protestant alike, these men persist in their teaching and continue on their

way under the impression that they are in the path of divine duty and upholders of the most sacred truth; and while nations, communities, and individuals reproach them for being wily and deceitful, and despise them, as well as the Dominicans, for being the Thugs and Fakirs of Christianity, onward still they go in their appointed way, like a moral pestilence from land to land, never suspecting that they are deluded, or that they are or have been in any respect the emissaries of evil.

The name of Jesuit, like that of Jew, is by many accounted as a term of reproach. The Jews have been despised for their alleged greed, the Jesuits have been denounced for their plotting propensities and deceit; their history being one of the most remarkable paradoxes connected with true ethical science or moral philosophy. To do evil that good may come seems to have been one of their most established maxims, and, unless the revelations made even by Catholics concerning them are not the veriest fabrications, this maxim must be the key to most of the perfidious actions of this celebrated society; and the paradox is further illustrated by the union of great learning, great superstition, and great despotism in the same treacherous and intolerant body.

Among the prominent accusations brought against the Jesuits, they are charged with the most profound duplicity, it has been made clear that while professing one code they have practised another; and it is alleged that, in addition to their public and avowed objects and constitutions, there exists for the guidance of their hidden actions, and for the private direction of the thoroughly initiated, a secret code entitled, "*Monita Secreta*," and the notoriety they have gained for designing and intermeddling in religious and social, as well as in political matters, has drawn upon them the suspicion and frequently the antipathy of different governments. Paschal, a distinguished

Catholic writer, exposed and ridiculed their dangerous casuistry and disregard of principle in his Provincial Letters; the Jansenists, a Catholic society, were their bitter opponents; and Catholic as well as Protestant nations have been obliged to suppress and often to expel a religious body of men whose great learning and abilities were too often used to incite discontent and rebellion against the very rulers that had offered them shelter and protection. More than once the outcry against them became very great, so strong in 1773 that even Pope Clement XIV. had to suppress the society in Rome, in the Papal States, and "in all the States of Christendom." In many countries they subsequently managed to get re-established, and in many they still hold good their position; but subjected, as they deservedly have been, to expulsion—what they claim to have been persecution—and more cautious as they may now for a time be, their aims are still the same, and unless carefully watched they would dethrone Liberty and make mankind the veriest slaves of a corrupt and intolerant system.

Those who love freedom of opinion and who detest religious despotism in every form must ever be on the alert, for if there are Protestant as well as Catholic popes, there are also Protestant Jesuits who, to a certain extent, are as designing and as dangerous against free thought and free speech as those who claim to be the genuine successors of Ignatius Loyola.

The unsuspecting nature of Mary Kittson never led her to imagine that she was dealing with anyone less guileless than herself, or that Father Gabriel could ever desire to interfere in the least degree with anything relating to her, or with any family arrangements in which she was principally concerned. She was gratified with the fatherly attentions which he had paid her, and, like her parents, she felt much inclined to be influenced by his advice. She was also pleased at the many flatter-

ing compliments which Don José knew so well how to offer. He seemed to be a well-skilled, polished courtier, and one who in affairs of the heart might be a dangerous rival at least in his own country where his avowals in pure Castillian could be so persuasive among dark-eyed Spanish ladies. The Don could make his approaches gradually. He had already said many sweet things to Mary, which she had merely laughed at as being nothing more than refined expressions of his regard uttered in the warm idiomatic phrases of his country; but as soon as she discovered that he was inclined to underrate Henry Ambrose, and that the repeated expressions as to the opulence and high social position of which she was said to be deserving, had a deeper and more significant meaning, and that he was making advances almost stealthily and unobserved, she was startled at the discovery, and at once took precautions to be more guarded and watchful.

It is thought by many that there are certain minds which possess some mysterious power of forecasting future events, or of obtaining glimpses of that which is yet to take place. Whether the knowledge comes in fitful dreams, or through some occult agency revealing itself in impressions, still, whether it be a mental delusion or not, the impression will exist, and expectation, hoping or fearing, often awaits either the happiness or the misery that is really anticipated. Mary Kittson, for the first time in her life, was seriously troubled. She saw a cloud in the distance, and its appearance was ominous. She was surrounded by influences that she could scarcely understand, and, then, when she naturally confided in her mother and looked to her for some cheering explanation, she was amazed to find that there was no word of censure for Don José, but, on the contrary, that her mother evidently seemed very much pleased that he had paid her daughter so much attention,

and that she was even further disposed to think that the Don was every way superior to Henry Ambrose.

Mary's heart almost failed her. What could have brought about such a state of things? She must see Henry at once; yet he had been unaccountably absent for several days and she had had no word of explanation from him. The cause of his delay was another source of great uneasiness; and her mother who would but lately have been so ready to complain of any such apparent neglect, was now quite reticent on the subject. Besides this, her father, who at first seemed indifferent as to the advances made by the Don, now seconded her mother's views in relation to him, and it became painfully certain to Mary that her parents were singularly favorable to a stranger and almost hostile to one who had but recently been so high in their estimation and who had gained her earliest affections.

Only a short period before this, any wish of hers would be readily consulted, and her mother especially would have done much to gratify the desires of a favorite daughter and to secure her happiness. But now, when her most cherished hopes were endangered, when no appeal was of any avail, and when no pleading seemed to have any effect on that mother's strange determination, she felt that unless some potent influence could be used in her favor, her future life would be one of the most desolate and unhappy imaginable. In her depressed state she tried to account for this mysterious difficulty, but she was unable to find any solution. What was the cause of this unaccountable change in her parents, a change almost as sudden as it was unexpected, and what should she do under such circumstances?

Among many of the first Irish families, as it is among some others, it is counted a most daring and inexcusable defiance of parental authority to oppose the wishes of a father as to a matrimonial connection, and when both parents are united in

opinion as to the suitor who should be favored, any persistent choice in opposition to their views is regarded, at least by the parents, as a terrible breach of filial obedience which is sufficient to be followed by some heavy misfortune. While therefore in a state of the greatest perplexity, she sought the advice of the priest. Since Father Gabriel had become their guest, or rather one of the family—indeed in one sense it might be said that he was the principal of the household—he had not only been consulted on all occasions, but had actually become the father confessor for all under the roof of Shandon Villa. To him, then, Mary went. It is presumed that, long before this, Father Gabriel well knew the strong feelings of her heart and on whom her affections had been placed. He had but just returned from a visit to Henry's parents, he had frequently visited them of late, and when Mary addressed him on a subject so important to her, he appeared to listen with a placid face and with a calmness of manner that gave her confidence in his impartiality, and encouragement as to the result of his influence, should he use it with her parents in her behalf. She also felt that a few words from Father Gabriel in the ear of Don José would be sufficient to deter him from again addressing her as he had done, or from making any further attempts to prejudice her parents against him to whom she had been affianced; for she suspected Don José alone as being the cause of her present unhappiness.

When the priest heard what she had to say, he seemed to be somewhat perplexed as to the course he should pursue. First of all he said it was his duty to defend his friend Don José and exonerate him from all blame; for a more honorable or undesigning man never lived. He said this and much more in defence of his friend, without however being able to remove the suspicions which Mary still secretly entertained. Yes, the

worthy father seemed really perplexed ; he would do what he possibly could ; but yet, he said, it was a very serious matter to be opposed to the wishes of a parent in such an important transaction. No earthly being could take such interest in a child as a parent would. It was but natural that they should desire to see a daughter, particularly their favorite, as she was, well settled in life, and it would only be reasonable to suppose that they would be the best judges of the most suitable person on whom to bestow her hand. We sometimes, he said, fancy that our affections are very strong and unchangeable, instead of that they are frequently fickle and subject us to the charge of inconstancy. They were, he said, mostly only like a rope of sand, and when duty or obligation required it, they could by a little resolution be easily transferred. It often happened that the objects of our first regard prove unworthy, and what a mistake—an error which might imperil the happiness of a lifetime—to be too confident that our love, or the love which another may profess to have for us, is not a deceptive, impulsive feeling. The greatest caution was necessary that we should not be deceived ourselves by youthful attachments ; besides, if it was the holiest sacrifice to subdue these for the service of God, next to this it was the holiest duty of a child to submit to the wishes of a parent, and so far as he knew of her excellent father and mother, they would be the last to urge her to take any step, particularly in so serious a case as a marriage, if they had the slightest^d doubt that it was not for her benefit. However he would see what could be done. Perhaps her parents would be more ready to yield to her than she seemed willing to bend to them ; but if they persisted it was simply her duty to obey. Obedience to parents, to superiors, or to those placed in lawful authority over us, was the best proof of true Christian humility ; the blessing of the Church always fol-

lowed such submission, while the contrary course might prove disastrous to all concerned.

Not only the priest's words but also his manner had a most depressing effect upon Mary. She felt like one over whom some calamity was impending. There was scarcely a hope held out for her. From the spiritual father, from whom she expected some happy assurance, there was nothing encouraging, and nothing was so strongly urged as the duty of making a sacrifice which she well knew would be blighting to her earthly happiness.

Father Gabriel, perceiving her reluctance even to think of parting with the idol of her soul, grew rather impatient, and tried again to impress on her mind the great and holy duty of submission to a parent. Obedience in such a way was next commendable to submission to the Church. We are all called upon to lay some pearl of great price upon the altar of the Lord. To yield up that which is but little value could scarcely be esteemed a self-denial, but to present the dearest treasure of the heart, if required, was an offering which would be most acceptable to God and to His Church. Besides this, he would now suppose a case for her consideration. Were the young man to whom she had, it might be, thoughtlessly plighted herself, were he, for instance, to become prepared to chasten carnal affections, to take up his cross, to close his eyes to the glittering delusions of this world and to offer himself to the Church; were he to do this, not only out of a proper regard for the wishes of his parents, but as a sacred duty and in submission to a call from the Mother of God; and, persisted the priest, with some earnestness, were he to bow like others to the heavenly vision, to dedicate himself to the Church, and to offer himself for ordination, were he to do this, would it be for a frail, erring mortal to try to interfere or dare to allure him from the glorious mission. What inducement

could an unholy world offer to risk eternal condemnation by attempting such sacrilege? And then, as if influenced by some sacred emotion, the priest lowered his voice and said, that it had now become a painful duty—many of which he had to perform as an humble servant of the Church—yes, it was his duty to tell her plainly, that from what he could learn, and he had had his information from those who could speak with authority, that Henry Ambrose had changed his affections and would in all probability offer himself for the priesthood.

Were the sun to disappear at once and leave the heavens in darkness, were the moon to be blotted suddenly from the midnight sky, were the stars to fade away forever, the world could not appear more desolate or hopeless to Mary Kittson than life now seemed to her. The dreadful import of the priest's words left scarcely a doubt in her mind that all was lost. While hardly permitting herself to suspect Father Gabriel of any design, she felt that he must perhaps unwittingly have been used by the Don as the principal instrument to carry out a base intrigue; and from that moment, though disinclined to speak as freely as she desired, the name and the presence of the priest's unscrupulous friend caused her to tremble with apprehension.

If she dared to hope at all it was that she might see Henry and warn him against treachery, remind him of his pledge, and assure him of her constancy. But how was she to see him? Henry came not, and after many weary days and dreadful nights had passed away it became apparent to all that the pale cheek and languid expression of Mary Kittson were symptoms that could not be mistaken; and when her parents at last grew alarmed as to her condition, they found that certain matters had been already so arranged and matured as to shut out forever the only chance of hope or restoration for their poor stricken child.



CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNHOLY SACRIFICE.

FATHER GABRIEL, as a priest, was now more saint-like than ever. He had many encouraging words for Mary's parents, and he visited her daily with pious exhortations and lessons on resignation, exhibiting the tenderest human sympathy. She often searched his face as if in doubt even of him, but when she found it beaming with kindness and pity, and heard from his lips beautiful expressions regarding the future happiness in store for the afflicted, she became more resigned and felt in some degree that without the blessing and admonition of this spiritual friend her deprivation and loneliness of heart would almost be insupportable. She had once or twice secretly entrusted him with a letter which she enjoined him to deliver with his own hands to Henry if possible, but after having waited for the reply that never came, she seemed to lose all hope, and when the priest on his next visit found her weeping on her knees before a crucifix—weeping as if her heart would break, weeping for the beautiful things of life and for the joys that were forever departed,—it was then that Father Gabriel exhibited his power as a priest of God's True Church. He knelt with her, and seemed to weep with her. He importuned her to alienate her heart from the world; he pleaded with her to place her affections on heaven, and finally, his

gentle words of assurance were so powerful, so convincing, and his paternal blessing so comforting, that Mary, in a kind of ecstasy, told him that she was resigned, even happy, and quite prepared to yield up to God that great treasure which had made life once so delightful ; a sacrifice which she had no doubt would make her future state more blissful and glorious.

Father Gabriel appeared to be much affected by this touching evidence of piety and submission. He assured her that her holy determination had already caused joy in heaven, and that the Virgin Mother, accompanied by angels, would be ever near to comfort and protect her. It was evident, he assured her, that she was spiritually directed, and that now as she had wisely decided to remain single, and to form no earthly alliance, but to renounce the world and its vanities, she should at least try, like the purest of her sex, and make her life useful, and set a holy example to others ; an example such as one whom he should now call her spiritual brother would shortly give. Henry Ambrose, once perhaps her dearest friend, was now preparing for ordination. He was doing this as much in submission to the religious desires of his parents as to satisfy his own pious inclinations—this he knew to be a fact. Yes, Father Gabriel assured his spiritual daughter that he was aware of this, and that Henry was about to become a member of the holiest of all fraternities. Would it not, then, be an encouragement to this friend, a mark of her approval, and something under the circumstances most appropriate, were she to decide to enter a convent, where, secluded from the contentions or allurements of a wicked world, she could devote her life to the service of the Holy Virgin, where, if disposed to invest the means at her command to the greatest advantage, she could have the privilege of laying upon the altar of the Lord for the benefit of His poor, or for His exclusive service, the portion or even part of the

same with which she was to be endowed as an earthly bride, and where, as one of a saintly sisterhood, she could adorn the Church of God and pray for the conversion of unbelieving sinners.

Ah! what a struggle there then came! What a fluttering of heart and faintness of spirit! As a woman her affections were strong, and though she had resolved to give up the world, she was again irresolute. Then came another trial. Could she give him up, could she give all up forever? Oh forever? Could she, with her youth and her still beautiful form, turn a recluse and enter a living tomb, or step into the grave now yawning nearly at her feet? Oh! was there no one to pity, no one to save her from this terrible despair? She shuddered as if confronted with some ghastly object. She wept again, and through her tears she could see green fields and flowers in the garden. She could see the distant hills and trees, the blue sky and the glorious sunlight. Could these be but beautiful delusions made but to attract and deceive? Were quiet and holy domestic endearments, felicities that she never should enjoy? Was human love an iniquity, and was her heart corrupt for having ever entertained it? Oh, what a struggle! And while Mary still wept as if bending over the grave of her fondest hopes, the priest's calm voice was again heard. She paused to listen to his gentle remonstrances, yet now his words dropped one by one like tears upon her heart, and with the chilling sensation of death. He grew more earnest and eloquent, then they came as words of fire. The evanescent joys of earth were contrasted with the everlasting delights of heaven where tears would be wiped from every eye and where anthems of praise and exultation should ascend forever and ever. Would it now be wise, he asked, to risk eternal bliss for a few transient years of happiness in this world?

Again she became excited, again enthusiastic. Again she became resolute, and then there was a welling of holy ecstasy, and the priest who stood by her side, knowing that her lingering affections might still cause her to waver, seized the opportunity to win her for the Church. By a mild, persistent manner, peculiarly his own, he induced her to write a last letter to Henry Ambrose. In that she stated that feeling her duty was greater to God than to man, she had resolved to enter a convent for life ; that she had come to this determination deliberately, and after due reflection, it being her own free choice ; that, as one who had once loved him and who still wished for his happiness, she would strongly advise him to give up the world and offer himself to the Lord as she had done ; and she concluded by expressing the hope that she should live to hear of his ordination, and that she should ever remain his spiritual friend and sister. She further continued that she should ever pray for his happiness, and beseech the Virgin that if they were destined to meet no more on earth, they should meet and recognize each other in the Kingdom of Heaven.

After having written this, she still held the letter, first looking for a minute mournfully at the words, and then with amaze and an almost frightened stare as if she had been but just signing her own death warrant. Her hand trembled, and the paper was blurred by the tears which fell again, by the tears which fell fast upon the page beneath her eye, as if to blot out and cancel the renunciation she had penned of her natural, proper, and most useful position in society ; and, as if to make null and void for ever a statement most repugnant to the fondest desires of her heart, but against which her tongue was now unable to utter the most feeble protest. Her hand still trembled, her eyes grew dim, and before she fell back in her chair almost unconscious, the letter dropped from her hand, and the priest, evidently on

the alert, hastily picked it up, left the room, and went at once, as though he felt it his duty, to congratulate Mary's parents on the result.

No one could be more sympathizing or attentive to them that evening than Father Gabriel. Though Mr. and Mrs. Kittson esteemed him a spiritual benefactor and coveted his blessing, yet their natural feelings prevailed, and they almost felt a regret when they heard of Mary's final decision. Still the priest wished to convince them that they were to be envied in having a daughter so pious and dutiful, and what a happiness at the close of life the reflection would be that a child of theirs had given up all—her heart, her beauty, and, what was of course a less consideration, her wealth—in order to be enrolled under the banner of the Sacred Heart, among the meek virgins of the holy Church.

Mary's parents tried to assure themselves that the priest was right, and to feel satisfied with what had just taken place, and though they felt keenly for their daughter's apparent dejection, they thought it would not only be very wrong, but extremely sinful, to interfere with the fancied free choice which she had made. As for Mary herself, though somewhat calmer, she sat, poor patient thing, like one bewildered, or under the influence of some strange, unpleasant dream. She made no complaint. She listened like a child to what was said, but occasionally when some sad, bleak thought would return, revealing her situation, her eyes would fill with tears, and, like one gazing wistfully back upon some fond receding shore gradually fading in the distance, or as one looking mournfully at some shadowy image of the memory, the image of something once beloved, she would bow her head in silent anguish, and while pressing her wounded heart she would be heard murmuring—a prayer for resignation.

Late that night, when all others had retired, Don José and Father Gabriel sat together in an upper room of the villa. They spoke in whispers. The priest related how he had tried to carry out the plan to secure Mary and her fortune for his listening friend ; a fortune which he well knew would, thereby, be subsequently devoted to the Church ; how he had unexpectedly failed because of the silly notions of that half love-sick girl ; how he had been entrusted with letters from Mary to Henry, and from Henry to Mary, which he had opened and read—enabling him to counteract any opposing project—and which letters he had never delivered ; and how he had, after some difficulty, succeeded in inducing the parents of Henry Ambrose to decide on almost compelling their only son to consent to take orders as a priest. He then described minutely the stratagems to which he had resorted in order to convince Henry that Mary had decided upon a conventual life out of regard for the wishes of her parents, as well as to satisfy her own pious longings ; how Mary's parents were led to believe that to make choice of the Don, and to bestow the hand of their daughter on him would be greatly to her advantage ; and how, having failed in this consummation, he had managed to secure her person, and, he fully expected, her fortune, for the Church.

The Don, of course, was all along aware of what his friend was doing. He and the priest had worked privately together to bring about a certain result. If the Don could not succeed in winning Mary's hand, Henry was to be sternly opposed—even vilified—and, in some manner, to be set aside or made away with if necessary ; but the easiest and the most plausible plan would be the best, and, if at all possible, he was to be persuaded to become a priest ; and then, it was supposed, that Mary could be easily induced to enter a convent. To this end the greatest deception and perversion of truth had to be prac-

tised to make the heartless plot successful. And the scheme effected all that they had desired.

The Don shrugged his shoulders after he had heard the priest's story, apparently indifferent as to the result so far as he was concerned ; and within two days from that time he was on his way to the Continent. Father Gabriel remained to make further arrangements in order that there should be no failure in having his spiritual children placed safely within the fold, and their fortunes secured for the Church. The young persons were still kept apart ; their last interview had taken place. In less than a month Henry Ambrose was on his way to Rome, and Mary was a novitiate in a convent ; the priest having already applied for a dispensation to hasten her full admission as a nun.

It was a beautiful day, a veritable bridal day. The sun never shone more brightly and his glorious beams were spread over land and sea. The waves and the waters seemed to sparkle with joy, and the flowers were still glistening with their weight of dew. At an early hour devotees were seen moving towards the Catholic Cathedral, and though the citizens of Cork had frequent opportunities of witnessing great religious ceremonies, yet the one that was to take place to-day was expected to be of a kind so peculiar that great numbers of persons had been induced to enter the church ; and fully an hour before the time mentioned for the commencement of the services the large edifice was almost completely filled. Marriage ceremonies are always attractive, and young people in particular will seldom fail to be present to see two persons stand before the altar and hear them make vows before all, which, no matter how grossly violated afterwards, are still held by the Catholic Church to be indissoluble. But to-day, not only the young, but the aged, the worn and the feeble were in attendance, besides those who

were known to be very religiously inclined, and for whom ordinary matrimonial services could have had no special interest. All were in waiting. The high altar, richly decorated, was brilliantly lighted, and the most beautiful flowers could be seen in profusion among the silver candelabra. Seated within the altar-rails were six or seven young ladies in bridal robes. Each, with solemn expression of countenance, was reading some devotional book. Not a blush or a smile came upon the face of any of these to reveal even for a moment any pleasing thought which might have entered her mind—any light reverie or fancy which a bride might have who was expecting the bridegroom—each look, on the contrary, seemed to be downcast, and the features of each young lady appeared to be fixed in sad serenity. Mary Kittson was one of the number. She was superbly dressed in magnificent white satin and almost enveloped in a veil of costly lace. It was the very bridal dress made for her intended marriage with Henry Ambrose. Her sweet face was deadly pale, and her soft tresses fell upon her white shoulders, now white and cold as the purest marble; and for some reason all eyes appeared to be centred on her.

The bishop and the clergy soon entered, preceded and followed by a procession of boys in albs. Besides lights, flowers, pictures and statuary, the clerical vestments glittering with spangles and gold lace, the silver censers, and other consecrated paraphernalia made the religious pomp on this occasion particularly attractive. Now the organ was heard, and nearly all in the church stood up, while the bishop and his attendants advanced and bowed before the altar to mutter a few introductory prayers. Then there was more bowing and praying, and after some peculiar genuflexions and further religious exercises, the bishop was attired in his full episcopal robes; maniple, stole and chasuble being of the most gorgeous description; his mitre,

and even his shoes or slippers, shining with costly gems. Thus arrayed, and bearing his ornamental crosier, he became seated in his episcopal chair or throne at one side of the altar, and the novices knelt before him, Mary Kittson being nearly in the centre and immediately in front of her high spiritual functionary.

His Lordship then delivered a long address in relation to the holy vow they were about to take. He congratuated them on the spiritual efficiency which they had attained, and he commended their example to others. He added that their resolution to exclude themselves from a sinful world would be a source of great happiness; that though they might be scoffed at, or subjected to the affected pity of the irreligious, yet they would find greater fortitude in every trial, and that in the retreat they were about to enter they would have a sanctuary where they would find a peace of mind which the world could not give. Each novice then repeated the obligation of perpetual chastity. When this was concluded, a priest came and divested Mary of her rich veil; he took away her earrings, her necklace, her brooch, and every other ornament which she had been permitted to wear for the last time. Her silken hair was then cut close to her head and thrown aside, she was habited in the black garb of a nun, and when she bent her head to receive the crown of virginity from the bishop, the anthem "*Veni Sponsi Christi*" was sung by the choir. The final ceremony was the anathema, and while another priest was reading the sanctified maledictions of the Church against such as should prove false to their vows, Mary fell at the feet of the bishop, and was taken fainting from the church and borne away to her lonely cell in the cloistered prison of her convent.

On the evening of that day the sun sank below the horizon with the most glorious surroundings. The earth in the fading

red light looked like the abode of innocent beings, and appeared to be the home of the blest, where sorrow or suffering never came; where tyranny could not exist, and where neither potentate nor priest could ever teach or practise deception. But Mary saw not the beautiful vision, she heard not the lulling whisper of the evening air. Her eyes were still closed, she saw not the gloom around her, nor the ghost-like nuns who stood by her hard bed. She heard not the drawing of their beads, nor the muttered *paters* or *aves* that were vainly repeated for her benefit. Her lips moved, and the mother abbess, who was present, stooped to hear her words. She whispered "Henry," and the startled nuns prayed more fervently that the unholy passion, which they feared still lingered in her breast, might be banished from her heart forever.

A few months after this, when the slight fall of snow lay like a shroud upon the earth, when the trees stood bare and leafless in the melancholy wind, and when the robins sought shelter in the ivy or under the eaves or lintels of the church, there was to be another ceremony in the same cathedral where Mary had but so lately repeated her last formal vows. The edifice was draped in black, and furnished with various mournful emblems of death; and though the altar had numerous lights, they were only in sad contrast with the pall-like covering by which it was nearly hidden. A coffin lay near the altar-railing. It contained the body of a dead nun, and Mary Kittson's poor wan face could be seen therein, her eyes closed for ever in the last deep sleep. A solemn high mass was being said for the repose of the soul of the departed sister, and though many present envied her the happy exit she was supposed to have had from a world of care and affliction, yet remorse must, at last, have touched the hearts of Mary's parents, for, gazing on their lost child, they wept as if they could not be comforted, and as if they now felt assured

that neither prayers, nor tears, nor offerings, nor sacrifices, nor the whole faith of the Church could triumph over the great despoiler, ever more awaken the sleeper, or reanimate her that was dead.

The last funeral anthem was now heard, and its sad strains came like a wail upon the ears of the bereaved. At intervals their sobs could be heard, but no sobbing was more pitiful, and no tears fell faster than those of the young man wearing the student's garb of a foreign religious seminary. With pallid cheek and quivering lip he stood at a distance from the bier upon which now lay all that had once made life dear to him. He watched the calm face of the dead as if still expecting some fond recognition. But when no greeting smile came back to light away the gloom which had settled for ever upon the features of her he had loved, he wept more bitterly and had the sympathy and the tears of those who knew the history of his early sorrow. It was Henry Ambrose who had received permission to leave Rome in order to hurry and see his mother who was thought to be beyond recovery from a dangerous attack, and he arrived at his old home scarcely an hour after Mary's premature decease. He was one of the chief mourners at her funeral, he aided in the last rites at her grave, and when the moon shone down that night upon the wintry scene in the cemetery, he returned there alone to kneel upon the fresh mound, and to drop a last tear upon her solitary place of rest.





CHAPTER XX.

THE SECRET PASSAGE.

THIS was Shawn's mournful story of the life of my Aunt Mary, and many times during its recital I could not refrain from tears. When he ceased to speak we sat silent for a time unable to resume conversation, but when I thought of the iniquity that had been practised to carry out a scheme which had been so wicked and disastrous, I was amazed to think that any class of persons, particularly those of the priesthood, claiming to be actuated by religious motives, could be guilty of the heartless treachery which had been used against my mother's sister and her too credulous and confiding parents and friends. When the clergy for so bad a purpose could deliberately deceive and injure innocent members of their own flock, what would they not be willing to do to those of an alien creed? I had often before heard of Jesuits, but had never had a positive evidence of their vileness until this relating to my poor persecuted aunt. I felt almost incensed against all belonging to an order of priests that in my opinion was now more than infamous. I doubted the integrity of popes, bishops and priests; and even of ministers of every rank and denomination. I doubted the efficacy of religion itself while it was possible for so hideous a system as Jesuitism to spring out of it. I doubted what was called piety, or holiness, as well as sacred creeds and beliefs of

every kind ; and from much that I had already witnessed, I thought the world would be far better had revelation or religion never been presented to man for his benefit or bewilderment ; and I was almost ready to upbraid God himself for his imagined permission of so great a wrong, and for not at once annihilating its perpetrators.

In a little time, Shawn noticing how I was affected turned my attention to other matters, as if unwilling to allow my mind to become too much oppressed by what he had related. He seemed to take it for granted that as human affairs were now ordered, that so long as forward unworthy men wormed themselves into power, that so long as people submitted to be overawed by the pretensions of any class claiming to be the vicars or delegates of a Supreme Being, or the legitimate successors of any who had sufficient effrontery to demand or usurp authority, that so long as people choose to be deferential and servile to men in high power who had in a thousand ways proved themselves as weak and as fallible as others, so long should deceit be practised and tyranny exercised. Yet he often expressed a hope in the future. In his own peculiar phraseology he used to say, that the time was not far distant when all of every degree should become more intelligent, and when the exercise of reason and common sense should enable men to separate the chaff from the wheat, to dissolve the union between pretension and ability, and be to all the basis of intelligent belief. That the stolid faith—the glamour of frenzied votaries—should no longer be “the substance of things hoped for,” but that that only which was clearly seen, proved and understood should be accepted as the rational foundation of faith. And, further, he would assert, that when the laws or forces of nature which men had shaped into omnipotent overruling beings, became better known, superstition should fade away, and that

visionary creations such as banshees, ghosts and fairies, that to a most degrading extent had peopled and governed the minds of persons like Nelly Carberry, should disappear like the dream that becomes unreal and evanescent in awakening from heavy sleep.

These ideas were given by Shawn in his own simple way, and they seemed to have the stamp of truth. Touched as I then was by what I had just heard of the pitiful story of my aunt's sufferings, and what I could call to mind respecting all I had heard in relation to the hatred of sects and the wicked unfeeling conduct of many religious people, I felt a strong impression that Shawn's reflections were just and his deductions reliable.

"Speaking of ghosts and Nelly Carberry now reminds me that you said you would show me how the ghost or spectre-priest got into the big room, and afterwards got out of it. This is something I want to find out; for I told you how I went there alone to try and discover the secret, and how disappointed I felt in having to leave the room no wiser than when I entered. After a strict search, the only satisfaction I had was in finding the portrait which you said was painted in the convent by a nun a few days before my aunt died. You will show me this to-day, I may never again have such an opportunity."

"Well, *alanna*," replied Shawn, "'tis no great saycrit to keep now. The time was wance when it id be danger or death itself to others to show the way to a stranger. In thim days a priest daren't be seen in all Ireland; av he was found he'd be hung as round as a hoop. The government had their spies here an' there—an' they were no *omadhawns*—on the look-out for priests; but still they came, an' they found their way into churches and convints, an' sometimes into houses, through ways underground, an' other ways. Thim wor dreadful days in this country! But now, as you know, priests and parsons are a'most on the same

footin'—one houlds his head up as high as the other. Well tho' there wasn't much need av thim underground *ballaghs* in my day, still the clargy kept the matter unbeknown—they had no great trust in Protestants or *sassenachs*—an' few wor the wiser. But some one had to be tould, an' years ago, whin I was a little gorsoon, I was trusted an' taken through minny a time by a very ould man and shown the way ladeing to the church. I know it yit, an' I remimber that a priest won't got into throuble av sum kind wid the law, an' was going to be taken before a judge or a coort av he was caught. We wint down in the hole together. I hild one ind av a rope, an' he hild the other; an' we groped away in the dark ontill we cum out there beyant, an' thin he got into a ship that was waitin', an' he sailed away to France."

Shawn pointed to a spot on the side of the hill, not a great distance from where we now sat, and said that the opening must be still somewhere down there, but that as he had not been in or near it for many years, it might not be readily discovered. However, as he had no objection that I should see the place, and feeling that my curiosity was excited, and that I would not heedlessly make the entrance known to any one else, he led the way, and we soon reached a little pathway which sloped along the side of the hill. When we got rather more than half way down, we came to a ravine or large gap. Here we left the pathway and crossed a rivulet, then we turned to our right up the hollow, gradually ascending in the direction of the Catholic cathedral. We had to push and force our way in many places through bushes and brambles, and we stumbled repeatedly over loose stones that lay thick upon the ground. I was still a short distance behind Shawn. He had not got many yards up the gap before he stood still, and he told me to remain where I was. The bushes here were so thick and high that I

could not see him ; nor could I see the harbor below us. In a short time I heard Shawn removing stones and cracking the branches of some bush or small tree that stood in his way. He then called me, and, somewhat perplexed, he was trying to find an opening in what looked to me like a massive piece of moss-covered red rock that was almost completely hidden in the tall faggots or brambles that grew close around. In a little time he drew me towards him and pointed to the rough and nearly indistinct form of a small cross cut upon a slightly projecting stone, being part of that which he now told me was a wall. It would be difficult for any one else to make such a discovery, for every crack and fissure appeared to be filled with a rank growth of moss or fungi, which made the wall itself look more like a piece of solid rock than the work of man. Removing a pile of stones which lay beneath the mark or cross, what appeared to be the outlet of a drain was uncovered. We stood quite still before this for a minute or two, Shawn in the meantime listened attentively, and then looked cautiously around as if dread-ing discovery. In old times, no doubt, when the life of a priest or his guide depended on secrecy, such precautions might have been necessary, but now when there was nothing to guard against except the prying curiosity of some wanderer, Shawn seemed to act instinctively as guides did of old when government spies were suspected of lying in wait close by, as well as in the most remote and out of the way places.

For about ten feet in length the opening was nearly circular and scarcely more than a foot-and-a-half in diameter. Shawn entered first. He stretched himself on the damp ground and drew himself in as best he could. I followed soon after, and got along with little difficulty. Almost suddenly I missed him ! I had got to the end of the narrow way and could go no further. I was then startled. Something grasped me by the back of the

neck, but in a moment I heard Shawn's whisper telling me to stand up. He helped to raise me, and by taking but one step upwards I found myself in a kind of walled cell about six feet long and three feet wide, and I think sufficiently high to allow a man to stand erect. The place was nearly as dark as night. Shawn grasped my hand, and turned at right angles into a narrow archway scarcely two feet wide, and so low that he had to stoop as he drew me along. Our progress was rather slow. The darkness was complete. Not a word was spoken, and when as I thought we were about half-an-hour groping our way I began to feel afraid; still for some reason I dared not speak. Though I had full trust in my guide, yet I was now heartily sorry that I had ever urged him to show me such a place, for to me its darkness and gloom were now almost terrible. Shawn seemed to be aware of my condition and he hurried on, and in less than a minute afterwards I was fortunately relieved by our getting to a stairway, or rather to about a dozen stone steps. These we carefully ascended, and he released me from his hold. I heard him feeling for something. His open hand seemed to be drawn slowly up and down a wall, then I heard what might be a door slide or roll aside, we stepped into a small recess and the door was slidden back. I heard his hand drawn along the wall again. Almost immediately a door flew open, my eyes were nearly blinded by a sudden rush of light, and we were safe in the sacristy of the cathedral.

My surprise and gratification were of course very great, and I was exceedingly glad to be above ground again. We were both covered with dust and cobwebs, and presented a singular appearance. He told me not to mind this, for we had, he said, another passage to go through to get to our destination. I was rather disconcerted at this, but as we had got safely thus far I felt sufficient courage to submit to a further entombment in

order to have the mystery fully explained. Besides we were prisoners where we were, for the vestry was securely locked, and we could not get into the body of the church, and Shawn was unwilling that we should be discovered here by any person.

Without much delay we crossed the large apartment. Shawn opened what appeared to be a closet door. We went in, he closed it again, and once more all was darkness. After a few efforts there was another sliding sound, and I felt a rush of cold air. We descended a few steps and were then in another walled passage, but it was wider and higher than the one through which we had passed to the church. We experienced no difficulty in making our way, and in less than five minutes we reached one more flight of steps. When we got to the top of these something was turned or pushed aside so lightly by Shawn that I could scarcely hear it move, and we entered a small room dimly lighted by little openings on one side near the ceiling. Shawn, having whispered me to keep very quiet, went to a spot where there was another opening lower down; it was no larger than a very small key-hole. He placed his eye to this for a moment, no doubt as a precaution to see if any one was near, then he took a step or two aside and, before I had time to think of what he was doing, a door sprung open without the slightest noise; we went forward and found ourselves in the big room.

"Well, you know where you are now," said Shawn brushing my clothes with his hand, and picking off the cobwebs.

"I do indeed," I replied, delighted at the discovery, "this is our own big room, and there's where the ghost came in and went out again so silently."

"Yis," said Shawn, "an' that very ghost is the livin' Hinry Ambrose, the viry same young man that was siperated from yer aunt Mary by thim Jaysuists—God help us!"

"Poor Father Ambrose! He is not young now, Shawn, but old-looking, and faded, and sorrowful—Poor Father Ambrose! I wish I had known him sooner. I pity him Shawn, and won't be afraid of him any more."

"You needn't, *alanna*," continued Shawn, "for he'd not hurt a hair av yer head. There's nothin' bad in his heart, there's been nothin' there fur years but sorrow that no prayin' or fastin' kin remove; an' shure they'll niver be innytin' else there. After yer aunt's death he wus made a priest, an' thin he came back to take lave av his friends, an' after that he wint away, or was sint away—the Lord knows which—to furrin' countries, I suppose, to try and convert poor haythins, that's maybe far better off than his own countrymin at home. He's back on'y a short time. Before he first wint away he said a mass for yer aunt's soul in this viny room—I was here at the time—an' maybe it was thin that he left her pictur in that little hole. For some rayson maybe he didn't want to take it with him, and thin whin he come back shure I suppose the poor creatur wantid to see her face agin, an' he stole in this way by moonlight whin you saw him like a ghost. Oyea! God help him, I'm afeard he'll soon be that or somethin' else. What's the world to him now! Shure he's not the on'y one that the men in black manage to lave as lone an' as sad as he is."

While I felt as sorry as ever for poor Father Ambrose, I could not resist the desire to search once more in order to find the door by which we had just entered the room. I thought I could not be deceived this time. Still after the closest examination I was baffled again, and I was almost annoyed at the result. There appeared to be no opening whatever in the oaken partition, and at last I had to ask Shawn to show me how we had found an entrance.

He told me it was quite simple, the only difficulty being, as

usual, to know how the thing was done. He then bid me watch him closely. By merely touching, in a certain way, a spring which looked like an ordinary knot in the centre of an oak board, part of the pannelled partition gave way noiselessly with the greatest ease; it opened like a door and closed to again without the slightest sound that I could detect. A most ingenious piece of work had been executed here, and it served an important purpose; for as Shawn had truly said, the time was when Protestant bigotry was so furious that no Catholic priest dared to be found in Ireland but at the imminent risk of his life. Certain priests did not however hesitate to incur this danger; they took up the cross laid in their way, and went to meet their people and perform religious duties in private. Many came for this purpose, and many escaped, but some were detected, and he who was so unfortunate as to be laid hold of had either to forfeit his life, or suffer grievously for his temerity. Therefore for the escape and security mostly of such persons, underground passages were made to and from churches and other religious buildings. And a writer, speaking of the manner in which proscribed Jesuit priests managed to enter into England and Ireland, and remain there for a longer or shorter time, even while the penal laws were in force against them, says—"They often resorted to the most singular disguises, and generally bore false names; and several of the old Roman Catholic mansions still shew the 'Priest-Hole,' which was contrived as a place of retreat for them in case of sudden emergency."* Our house being near the church, many a priest who dared not worship in the ecclesiastical structure, officiated before a temporary altar in some other place, or said mass here for devotees in private; and if there was an alarm he escaped by the 'Priest-Hole' in the big room.

* "Chambers' Encyclopædia."

"You said you were in the room long ago, when Father Ambrose first said mass in it for my Aunt Mary's soul. I wish you had been here lately when he repeated the ceremony; for I suppose he must have believed that she was still in purgatory, or else he would not have come years afterwards in black vestments to offer a sacrifice again in her behalf. How long must such services continue? Has the priest no means of finding out whether his prayers have been answered, and the soul that he yearns for released? Yes, Shawn, I wish you had been here at this last service; my baptism might not then have taken place, for you would have seen Nancy Ferrin and put us on our guard. O, Shawn, what shall we do? My greatest fear now is that that woman will tell my Aunt Catherine all about it, and you know she will quickly tell my father; and then my poor mother will of course be the greatest sufferer."

"Well, *alanna*," replied Shawn, "as I tould yer before, I wouldn't come here to decave yer father fur all the airth. Father Ambrose, poor man, says mass for yer Aunt Mary's sowl with an honist purpose, but he knows no better nor ourselves how long it will take to git her out of purgatory, av there's sich a place—an' I don't think there is. Shure that's the trade av the Church. They'll say mass after mass fur popes, an' bishops, an' nuns, as well as fur the poorest sinner that kin offer thim half-a-crown for the ciremony. Faith they'll keep at that just as long as you like, fur, betune ourselves, its not the worst payin' bisniss. But though I wouldn't come here myself, av I knew as much thin as I do now I'd take good care that Nancy Ferrin wouldn't be wid yes at that last christenin'. Arrah, but wait a bit. I've been thinkin' av this, an' av I can't make Nancy hould her tongue no one kin.—Whisper, *avick*! I could tell you something av I liked."

He paused and gave me a kind of knowing look. "Oh do

tell me, Shawn," I hastily uttered; "tell me anything to satisfy me that she won't be able to hurt my mother."

"Well aisy, aisy, *alanna*," said Shawn with assumed calmness; "now, lit me see." He stooped over, and in a kind of half-whisper said, "now av I tell you a bit av a sacrit will you keep it safe an' sound all to yerself?"

I gave Shawn every assurance to this effect.

"Now, thin, I'll trust you—I haven't much to say, but its this. Long ago, when Nancy found herself gettin', what some called, ould an' stale, she became all in a hurry viry religious, an', by the same token, herself an' a sartin praychir—the man that she said that convarted her—used, they say, to be *collo-guin'* togither, an' so got as thick as you like. An' people began to talk an' talk—an' maybe there was rayson for that same. Well, in coorse av time, shure things came to a beautiful pass with Nance, an' she found it convaynint, maybe on account of the quare looks av things, to take a short journiy; an' I know where she wint to to keep out av the way, an' so does Peggy, my wife, an' another that's dead. Nancy forgits this now—oh, faith maybe she does—an' maybe she thinks I know nothing at all at all; but, *nabochlish*, av I don't remind her av this little matter you may call me what you like—an' I'll do that same afore she has a chance to see yer Aunt Kate agin. Now cheer up, avick, an' see av I don't do this thing to perfiction—av I don't my name isn't Shawn Bawn!"

It was evening. I heard my mother's voice again. She and my sister had just come back after having parted with Jane at Monkstown. A feeling of loneliness now returned. I thought it was an age since she had left us, and after what had happened I asked myself when she would visit us again, and if she ever came should I be here to meet her. I thought of this, of the sad story of my poor Aunt Mary, and of our adventure through

the dark underground passage that led us home again. The day so far had been one of the most eventful of my life, and though I felt depressed yet I was comforted by the assurance that we had a friend in Shawn who would frustrate the mischievous designs of Nancy Ferrin.





CHAPTER XXI.

MY AUNT'S HOUSE.

MY father returned on Saturday, and with him came my aunt. I must say that I was sorry to see her again so soon, not because I would probably have another dreary Sunday in her company, but because I felt that she came to carry out the project of having me sent away from home. My mother rightly judging that this was the object of my aunt's early return tried to hide her feelings as much as possible, though I knew she must have been sadly troubled. The Sabbath came, and to my joyful surprise I had not to repeat a chapter or even a verse of the Bible. I was not asked a single question in my catechism, I was neither cautioned nor reproved, but, without the least preliminary lecture, I was simply allowed to do as I liked. This circumstance was so remarkable, and so contrary to my experience, that I really began to indulge a hope that my future religious training would not be so severe or so repugnant to my feelings.

My father stayed at home while my mother and my sister were at church. I was left with William, and was delighted to be allowed to go with him in a boat to the island. My aunt unexpectedly remained out all day ; she did not get back until after meeting-time late in the evening. We of course thought she had been paying a visit to some of her Methodist

friends. She looked I fancied dissatisfied, and was rather demure and reserved, and having complained of a headache she went early to bed. Shawn for some reason disappeared the day before ; he either went up to his family in the city, or, as I was inclined to suspect, on a search after Nancy Ferrin ; but as he said nothing to me or to any one else about it I was unable to say which course he had taken. On Monday morning however he presented himself, and as soon as he got an opportunity of speaking to me alone, he told me that after much delay he had only had a chance for about five minutes conversation with his old acquaintance, Nancy, and that at first she affected not to have the least knowledge of that which he wished her to bring to her memory. She was not at her boarding place when he first called ; they could not inform him where she had gone to, but he was told that she was expected back by a certain hour the next evening in order to be able to attend meeting. He went again long before the time mentioned, and while on the watch for her outside, what must have been his surprise and consternation to see her coming on alone followed at a quick pace by some person evidently anxious to overtake her, and then to discover that that person was my aunt ; but then not wishing to be observed by her, he had to stand still and see them enter the house together.

Judging, no doubt, correctly as to my aunt's motive for a meeting with Miss Ferrin, he now saw that his only chance was to hurry forward and drop a word in her ear before she had time to communicate anything. She had scarcely time to take off her bonnet. A message came that a person wished to see her at the door for a minute on urgent business. Shawn was there to receive her, he made but little delay, and before he turned away from the surprised spinster, he had her positive assurance that she would be silent on a certain subject.

We left for the city on Tuesday morning. Oh what a parting with my dear mother and my sister ! I shall never forget it, or cease to remember all that was then said by one of the tenderest of parents. What a tie was sundered when I had to leave Shawn ; he was the last to let go my hand. Great tears stood in his eyes, still he dared not even mutter farewell. Had one such word escaped his lips at the time, the pent-up torrent would have burst through and overwhelmed him—poor Shawn ! And there was Nelly Carberry, Nelly that had so often sung and whispered me to sleep. She held me at first as if she never intended to let me go, and then at last when she had to release me from her strong embrace, she stood weeping aloud on the door-step until I was out of sight. I have often thought since that all that is most tender and humane in our nature is most clearly exhibited in the parting hour. When far out on the water, I looked back repeatedly to watch the roof and gables of our dear old house as they stood marked clearly against the blue sky ; I could see the glare upon the windows of the big room, and then my heart sank, and I felt inexpressibly sad ; for I thought I should never see that pleasant home again.

My aunt and I were now away together, and when she saw how I was affected she reproached me rather petulantly for being so sorry at parting. She was peevish with me at a time when I thought she ought to have been sympathetic. She spoke but little to me on our way, her mind seemed to be pre-occupied, and to my surprise she never once mentioned the subject of religion or alluded to a single popish infamy or delusion. I was to stay at her house in the city for a few days, until it would be convenient for my father to accompany me to the private school to which I was to be sent. William and he would follow us by the end of the week, but it was not yet decided whether my brother and I were to be sent to the same

academy. He was intended for the sea ; I for a very different calling.

The first stage of my journey from home was over. I was at my aunt's. Her resources, or rather those of Mr. Thomas Sharp, her husband, were, I understood, rather limited. They lived, however, in a three-storied house in front of the river. It was a house which might be made comfortable enough had it been properly cared for, but as my aunt had not a turn for housekeeping, it seemed to me that everything in the place was in disorder ; no two pieces of furniture being alike or of a similiar make. The moveables were a medley from auction rooms ; a richly carved table or chair being put side by side with those of the plainest modern manufacture. The parlour carpet struck me as being very odd-looking, it was composed of two different kinds of that material, half the width on one side being a double-ply web of a dark-brown color, and the other half being of grey tapestry, with a large pattern or figure, perhaps meant for a flower, scattered here and there, but which looked to me like a distribution of faded cabbage leaves. The pictures were a curious collection, large and small, oval, square, and oblong ; steel engravings, lithographs, and common wood-prints, the latter being highly colored, the most conspicuous hues being dark blue, yellow, and deep red ; the frames being as ill assorted as the sketches they were intended to ornament.

I must say that the selections on the whole would not, I am sure, have been attractive to my aunt, or received by her were it not that most of them were Scriptural illustrations and this alone gave them a fictitious value in her eyes which they would not otherwise have possessed. Little as I knew of drawing or painting, the fine plates and pictures we had at home, gave me a kind of taste for what was correct in this line ; but being in

doubt of my judgment I used to gaze in wonder at these representations.

The smallest pictures were those in the oval gilt frames, and were mostly engravings—cut out of the *Methodist Magazine*—of prominent preachers ; John and Charles Wesley, each in gown and bands, having a distinguished place over a row of lesser divines. The Scriptural scenes were numerous. In one, Satan was seen perched upon a pinnacle of the temple exhibiting the kingdoms of the world as a temptation to the mighty personage beside him. There was a large wood-print of Christ walking on the water and in the act of lifting the sinking Peter when his faith had failed him in an attempt to tread upon the sea ; there was another of Joshua in a long blue overcoat, commanding the sun and the moon to stand still ; and there was one showing the Israelites in the act of crossing the Red Sea dry shod, while a vast wall of water stood up perpendicularly on each side. Some of the commanders, exhibited in this print, wore turbans and long gowns, but I thought it very odd to see others of them wearing cocked hats and breeches. There were a vast number of spears and swords to be seen in the long array, but, now that I remember, it must have been a singular anachronism to depict some of these ancient chosen warriors with belts and pistols. One very conspicuous engraving however was that of King William crossing the Boyne. Mr. Sharp, my uncle, was an Orangeman, and of course his best room would not be completely ornamented without the presence of this illustrious monarch. But something still more attractive was, I think, the large gilt-edged family Bible, which lay clasped and elevated on the centre-table.

Distributed here and there, among pictures, engravings, and other ornamentations, were numerous printed texts of Scripture and pious aphorisms, such as—"Fear God," "God is

Love," "Faith First," "Take up your Cross," "Pray without ceasing," "Sinner Repent," "Beware of Unbelief," "Come to Jesus," "Who bears the Cross shall wear the Crown," etc. Indeed not only in this best room but in every other apartment in the house, up stairs and down stairs, such texts could be seen pasted or fastened up in every available spot, conveying warnings to the unbeliever and unrepentant—the very walls were eloquent to the eye—and my aunt felt a peculiar pride when these mute monitors became attractive to her visitors ; thus tacitly giving them an evidence of her abiding faith, and of the other cardinal virtues—Hope and Charity—by which she was actuated.

I had visited my aunt's house many times before this, but I suppose I was too young to have what I then saw make the impression they did at present. I have reason to believe that my father often rendered her pecuniary and other assistance, and, at my mother's suggestion, tried to have the house kept more orderly, but in spite of this the place had a shabby appearance. My aunt, however, seemed to care but little for these things. Household affairs were a vexation, and had a tendency to draw her attention from that which was of far more importance. Life was short and eternity long. Prayer-meetings, class-meetings, missionary-meetings and the ordinary services of the sanctuary should not be neglected for low worldly matters. Some could readily divide their affections between domestic and religious duties—she could not. The Lord would regulate her worldly affairs for her ; and in this reliance she let everything in her own house remain at odds and ends and wrong side foremost.

Incongruous as were many of the things collected and placed side by side in almost every room, nothing could show a more marked contrast than the personal appearance and mental pecu-

liarities of husband and wife. My aunt, somewhat like my father, was tall and slight, and of a quick, nervous disposition. Mr. Sharp was the opposite—low-sized, stout, and sluggish. He had fair hair, full heavy eyes, paleish flabby cheeks, and was slow in speech and movement. One was a Methodist, the other a Presbyterian, they had therefore many religious disputes; they contended about other matters, and there was scarcely any concurrence of opinion on ordinary affairs. My father and his partner, Mr. Casey, though different in outward form could yet agree about business transactions, but there was seldom such accord between my aunt and her husband. If he raised an objection she stamped and defied. There was to be but one ruler in that house. Mr. Sharp—who on rare occasions could be stubborn and determined—generally submitted, and my aunt had her own way. In addition to these singular contrasts, my aunt, having no children, had a favorite parrot which had been taught, perhaps by some former owner, to swear mildly; yet its flippant imprecations did not seem to disturb the serenity of its pious mistress. There was a dog and a cat that quarrelled whenever they chanced to meet; and there was a red-haired girl, named Susan, in the kitchen—a poor, patient, hard-working drudge—whom my aunt was almost always scolding for her indolence. So far for my aunt's family—I say my aunt's; for already it looked to me as if she alone had full control in the premises; and I had an instinctive feeling that I must be very obedient, and submit in all humility to her dictates while I remained under her roof.

On the day of our arrival, my aunt, after having given the rooms a hasty visit, and taken a cursory look at things about the place, descended to the kitchen and gave the girl the requisite scolding. The dog and the cat quarrelled nearly all the time my aunt was engaged at this duty; and the parrot, in

his great wire cage, kept stepping restlessly from side to side and repeating: "Dem me eyes; dem my eyes; dem my eyes;" "What the devil are you at? what the devil are you at? what the devil are you at?" "You be blowed; you be blowed; you be blowed." After the cessation of this domestic storm my aunt went out, to be absent several hours. She was one of the collectors for a missionary society, and had, she said, to make her returns that day. Mr. Sharp, who was a kind of under clerk in some public office, would not be back until evening, and as I had the place almost to myself—with a peremptory caution not to leave the house—I spent much of my time going from room to room and taking an ocular inventory of the curious things I saw, and of their still more odd and singular arrangement.

Not accustomed to be left so long alone, I stole down after this to the kitchen, and Susan, the girl, received me with all the warmth of an old acquaintance. Of course I had never seen her before, but she was truly delighted to have any one come and speak to her as I had. At first, one might think she was cross looking, but I soon discovered that she was one of the most kind and tender-hearted creatures I had ever met. She made me sit by the fire, and I watched her while she worked. She appeared to be very diligent and remarkably clean; in fact, I saw at once that the kitchen was, in some respects, the most tidy and comfortable part of the house. Still, as I afterwards discovered, she could not satisfy my aunt, who, I am sorry to say, made the servitude of this poor, patient creature particularly harassing and oppressive. She chatted pleasantly to me until she hurried through her work, and then she came and sat by me with all the familiarity of Nelly Carberry. I soon told her my story about my mother and Ellen; of how sorry I was when Jane left us, and how grieved I was

to part with them, as well as with Nelly, and Shawn, and our pleasant old house at Cove. Now I was going to be sent away somewhere to school, and that perhaps it might be a long long time before I should be allowed to see them again, and when I finished thus far my eyes were filled with tears, for she was the only person to whom I really opened my heart since I left home.

My recital affected her. What a singular expression there appeared on that worn-looking face! She looked cross, almost fierce, while her bosom must have been throbbing with the tenderest emotions. What dissembling there seemed to be between the stern, ill-favoured countenance and the very gentlest of human hearts! Poor girl! Her finest and most sympathetic feelings were masked by an uncomeliness that might be repulsive to many, or that would, perhaps, cause her to be shunned, or even despised, by those who were mostly led by appearances. But now, in my eyes, she was more than comely. There must have been some little opening in the black cloud through which I could detect the beautiful azure beyond. A momentary glimpse was sufficient to satisfy me. And then her voice—while she told me, in a few simple words, all she knew of her own history—so soft, and, at times, so plaintive, was like the pleasant murmuring of a stream, and kept me listening. She knew nothing of a father or mother, or of a relative of any kind. She was very young when my aunt got her—I think she said “bought her” at a foundling institution, but when or where she could not say. She must have believed that she had been bought, for was she not even now a slave—a slave without hope—one of the wrong color, for whom civilization would not grow indignant or attempt a rescue? She remembered having had to part with other children which were in the same place, but she was not sorry at the time for the change, as none

of them liked her, but used, she said, sometimes to get angry and call her ugly, and hurt her. She could not read. "Missus," as she called my aunt, had sent her two or three times to a Sunday School, but she could learn nothing there, for many of the children called her squint-eyed, and grinned at her, and teased her on every opportunity; and as the teachers, for some reason, were not partial to her, they paid her but little attention. She tried, she said, to be good and kind, but nobody seemed to like her. She worked very hard for my aunt, but she was as cross to her as any one else, and she scarcely ever let her go outside the house.

Poor simple girl, how I pitied her sad condition, for I already felt that she had nothing to hope for, and but little relief to expect from a life of drudgery and oppression; and, desirous of saying something to cheer her, I spoke a few encouraging words and she seemed delighted to hear me.

"O, Master John," said she, snatching my hand and holding it tightly to her breast, "Master John, what a dear, good, good little creature you are. Oh, if every one was like you, and would speak to me like you, how different I would be. You are so like Mrs. Reardon and Bertha, and you know me just like them. Oh how I wish you could be here all the time, how happy I would be. Oh you dear little fellow!"

Much as I sympathized with poor Susan, I am now ashamed to say I drew back more than once when I thought that in one of her impulsive moments she was going to kiss me—I really dreaded the touch of her lips. She must have noticed this, but it did not seem hurt; she had been too much accustomed to slights all her life to mind this one from me. She only drew a little closer and ran her fingers through my hair, and passed her rough hand several times across my forehead. After a while I asked her who Mrs. Reardon and Bertha were, and was

told that Mrs. Reardon was a poor woman to whom my aunt rented rooms in the garret, and that Bertha was her daughter. Susan said they had been very good to her since they came, just like what I was ; they helped to mend her clothes, but yet that my aunt did not like her to go near them, but, said Susan in a whisper, " We shall go together and see them some night when you go up to bed."

We chatted some time longer, and the time passed pleasantly by the fireside until my aunt's return.

What my aunt might have been among her pious friends outside,—how humble, how patient, or how exemplary,—I can only guess, but in her own house she seemed to lose heart—except when she had company—and was neither cheerful nor communicative, but, on the contrary, rather peevish and fault-finding. Mr. Sharp was not a man of many words, and we had dinner and tea almost in silence. The food being different in kind, from what I got at home, I ate but little. After this, Mr. Sharp went to smoke his pipe and my aunt sat sewing in silence. There was no book that I cared to read—I dreaded getting another chapter to learn—but to please her I read a little in Bunyan, and afterwards a terrible page or two in a book on future punishment. While I was looking at the printed words my aunt left the room, and I heard her down in the kitchen scolding Susan again. At an early hour we were called to attend family prayer. Susan gave me one of her dreary smiles when she entered the room ; such as it was, it helped to cheer me. My aunt made a short prayer, as tame and as matter of form as if she had learned it by heart or been reading it out of a book. Mr. Sharp's invocation was slow, long-drawn and very wearisome, and when this was ended I was glad to say " good night," and be led to my room by Susan.

When we got up stairs we heard voices in the garret, right

over my room. "Listen!" said I to Susan. They were singing a very soft, low melody—a little duett that reminded me of home. They dared not raise their voices lest my aunt should be disturbed, for she disliked to hear songs of any kind in her own house, except hymns. Susan left me, and I think she went up to see them, and maybe to tell them about me. I listened after I got into bed; the murmuring sound was very soothing to me at the time. I could only hear the chorus, which was, I suppose, repeated at the end of every verse, and I thought with more energy, and which, I had an impression, had some strange, sad, or peculiar meaning. The words were so singular that they made an impression on my memory, and I remember them yet :—

You and I, you and I,
Side by side alone must stand;
Few will pity, few will try
To reach us out a helping hand;
Scarcely else than scorn will be
In this cold world for you and me,
For you and me, for you and me.

I tried to keep awake to hear the song, and to catch the other words if I could. In my efforts to do this the sound seemed to die away, and while still listening I fell into a sound sleep.





CHAPTER XXII.

MY AUNT'S POOR LODGERS.

I AWOKE early and lay awhile in bed, taking a survey of my room. It was poorly furnished—very unlike the one I had had at home. A small deal table, a couple of plain chairs, a piece of rug at the bed side the only carpet, and a small looking-glass, cracked in two or three places, against the wall. There was one old faded wood print of Samson tying fire brands to fox's tails (as per Scripture); but to make up for other deficiencies, there were several texts arranged around the walls, similar to those I had seen in the lower rooms. As yet I heard no one stirring over head in the garret. Had they been singing as they were last night, I might have ventured to go up and peep at them through the key hole, for I was already desirous of forming their acquaintance.

When I went down stairs, my aunt was alone in the parlor reading a note or letter. From where I stood in the hall I could see her smile, and when I entered the room, she greeted me with unusual cordiality. I had not seen her in so agreeable a mood since the pleasant evening we passed at our house in Cove, when my father was so hilarious and demonstrative. She was going to have visitors that evening, and a particular acquaintance from that place was coming to spend a few days with her. She seemed in a bustling mood, and she hurried to

the kitchen to make some extra preparations. I did not hear her complain, when she was below with Susan.

She had, I thought, rather hurried morning prayers, and during breakfast my aunt was lively, and had scarcely a word of altercation with Mr. Sharp. He was going to ask a friend of his to join the expected company, and though my aunt made some objection on account of the "man's principles," yet for once she gave way, and her husband's acquaintance—a fellow-clerk,—was to be invited.

I have often thought that there should be some excuse made for my aunt's peculiarities. She had no child of her own, and some natures, without such an entwinement around the heart grow cold, insensible, and almost hardened. If music has power to soften the sternest expression into a smile, there is nothing touches the soul of a mother, like the music of her child's voice. Any latent feeling of tenderness that might have become frigid, or congealed in my aunt's bosom, had, therefore, never yet been thawed out, or melted into tears, by the influence of such harmony.

Shortly after breakfast, my aunt went out, and I was left again with Susan, but with the former caution, that I must not leave the house. This was quite unnecessary, for I took much pleasure in Susan's company, besides I had made up my mind to go and visit Mrs. Reardon, on the first opportunity. Susan was again delighted to see me. She was eating at a little side table in the kitchen, and I could not avoid noticing the poverty of her meal. There was neither cloth nor plate. A stale piece of brown bread,—hard as a crust,—a few potatoes in a little wooden dish, some salt on a broken saucer, something like milk and water in a bowl, and an old dinner knife, were all that lay before her. I saw neither butter, sugar, fish nor meat. If it had been a fast day, and she very pious, I might not have been

surprised at the slender fare, but as she knew nothing of the merit of fasting—that is to say, in a theological sense,—how she was to work hard and live on such food as this, was to me a mystery. I was almost ashamed to be a witness of her humiliation, for I felt it to be such ; but she, poor creature, seemed to share no such feeling. She looked contented, or tried to be so, perhaps under the conviction that she could not better her condition, by making a complaint.

At last I managed to ask—"Is this the kind of food you always get Susan?"

"Why yes, master John ; its what missus gives me every day."

"You get three meals I suppose?"

"Oh yes, three meals every day except of a Sunday, and then we only gets two—that is for myself you know."

"And why don't you get more than two on a Sunday, Susan?"

"Well, you know missus says I musn't work so hard then ; we gets our breakfast about ten,—but we have no regular time for meals, and then missus goes to meetin,' and when I do up the house I looks out of one of the windows up stairs, for an hour or two—but I mostly goes to Mrs. Reardon's when she's in—and then when missus comes back we gets dinner at four or five, and then she goes to meetin' again, and maybe doesn't come back until bed time."

I was astonished to find from Susan, that she never got even the smallest morsel of meat except at Christmas ; and on three or four other festival days during the year, that she was sometimes—I shall say—indulged with a little fish or soup, but with nothing else beyond what I had seen. She had but a very shadowy idea of what prayer meant, or why people went to church or meeting ; and, though she had my aunt as an example, she had, for some reason never been at such a place half-a-dozen times in her life ; and worse than this, she exhibited almost

total indifference to any thing concerning religion, or she was very ignorant as to its importance.

"Missus and master sometimes talks about that," she said, "but when they do they always quarrels, and then you know she scolds him like myself."

"Well, doesn't Mrs. Reardon ever go to meeting?"

Susan raised her hand as if to caution me, and then replied almost in a whisper, "Yes, she and Bertha sometimes go to another place. She told me cause she'd tell me anything, but she wouldn't like to tell any one else."

"You wouldn't be afraid to tell me, Susan; I think I shall like Mrs. Reardon and Bertha, and shall not say anything about them they would not like to have said."

"I know that," replied Susan. "Its a great secret and missus doesn't know it." She stooped and whispered, "They're Catholics, I believe; something I s'pose different from what we are; and if missus knowed it she'd turn them out; I'm sure she would."

Without waiting for Susan, as this was to be a busy day with her, I went softly upstairs—up to the garret landing—and stood listening outside for a moment or two. I wanted to be sure that Mrs. Reardon was in, for there was a back entrance by which they could get into or out of the house almost unperceived, indeed it was the only passage they had permission to use. I heard some one speak, and making no delay I knocked gently at the door. It was opened, and not caring about an invitation I walked in, and even deliberately closed the door after me.

"I'm John Fairband, Mrs. Reardon; Susan told me about you, and I wanted to come and see you." I felt already exceedingly bashful.

"You are very welcome, my dear, very welcome to our poor

room. We are very glad to have you come here; glad to see any friend, particularly you. Why, what a fine boy! Sit down John; sit down, my dear."

She led me to a seat, and I could not utter another word until I had finished my gaze—a gaze of perfect surprise. She smiled as she saw my look of astonishment, and then when Bertha came near, smiling also, and stood by her side, I must have looked as if I were amazed. How different from what I had expected! I felt the blood mount to my cheek, and I would have hung my head, completely overcome, had I been able to remove my eyes from the beautiful picture before me. Mother and daughter! Impossible! They must be sisters, one a few years older than the other. These were the only ideas that entered my mind at that moment. I never saw human forms more perfect—and up here in such a place! But the garret itself was now to me the most delightful part of the house, because these were here to adorn it—their very presence made it so. The vision seemed to fill the place with a rich glow; everything around appeared resplendent, and without being able to turn away my gaze I gradually drew up my hands and covered my face, as one would whose eyes had been dazzled by a sudden and unexpected burst of sunlight. In less than a minute my hands were gently drawn down, I could offer no resistance, and I let them drop by my side; and then I found myself seated between two angels, who now gazed at me in return. At last I stammered out:

"Oh, I thought you were so different?"

They laughed, and the sound was like the vibration of rich harmony. "What did you think we were?" asked the elder.

I hesitated and then replied, "Well, I thought you were maybe, like Susan."

They laughed again, and Mrs. Reardon said, "Oh I wish

we were as good everyway as Susan, but we never can be, she is so kind and so innocent."

And we are so glad you like her," said Bertha, the younger, speaking for the first time, and with the most charming smile.

"I shall like her now better than ever, indeed I shall," I continued.

"Because we like her, is it?" archly asked Bertha.

I looked into her sweet, pleasant face before I replied, and said, "Yes." I someway felt unable to say anything more at the time.

Mrs. Reardon could not be much more than thirty years of age, perhaps two or three years older. She was rather under medium height. Her hair was dark brown and wavy, and was confined under a small, plain but very neat cap. Her forehead was expansive, the eyebrows beautifully arched, the eyes of the mildest blue, the nose straight and finely formed, the cheeks wore the softest blush, and the mouth, lips and chin corresponded to form, perhaps, the most lovely face I had ever looked at. Still there were already traces of care and suffering to be noticed—a little shadow seen lurking here and there in the brightness of her countenance—as if she had some private sorrow, or was passing through the vale of affliction; and when she spoke, generally lively at first, her voice would often become unexpectedly sad or subdued before she said many words. Bertha who was perhaps in or near her sixteenth year, bore a remarkably close resemblance to her mother—as she must be called. She was scarcely so fair in personal appearance, but her youth and her lively disposition almost made up for this deficiency. They were both plainly dressed; they wore cotton gowns of the cheapest description. I thought they could not look better in anything else. They had no ornaments of any kind except a little black cross fastened to a ribbon, which was hung on Bertha's neck.

The room was rather bare of furniture—a little work-table, a large work basket, two chairs, a little covered stool, a larger table at one side of the room, and a bed in a corner, were the principal articles. There was no carpet, there were no pictures. I think there was a miniature near the bed, no texts, but to make up for the want of these, there were three or four flower-pots, in a little window, which held geraniums or other plants in full bloom; and a small gray cat sat purring and blinking in front of a scanty coal fire, in a most diminutive fire-place. From the contents of the basket, and from what lay on the work table, it struck me that they were dressmakers; it was to all appearance their only way of making out a poor living—poor it must have been—for judging by the humble place they occupied, and the evidences of decent poverty around, the struggle for life must have been, for these poor creatures, difficult enough.

This was what I noticed in little more than a minute while they sat looking at me. I now felt in some degree embarrassed, and offered an excuse for my intrusion by saying, "I heard you sing last night—we used to sing, you know, at home—and I listened to you until I fell asleep. I liked your singing very much and I wanted to come and see you, besides Susan said I would be so pleased with you."

They seemed very much gratified, and I grew more at ease.

"But you couldn't hear the words down in your room?" inquired Mrs. Reardon.

"No, not quite all of them. I wanted to find out, but could only hear the chorus, about "You and I, you and I, you and I." It reminded me of something that I had heard before, and I want you to sing the song again for me some evening while I am here."

Mrs. Reardon blushed when I said this, and I think she

looked more beautiful than ever. She said that as it pleased me they would sing a nicer song for me ; and she added the hope that I would not be going away very soon, they would be glad to have me stay yet a long time.

"I think I should like to remain very much ; I would if I could. I should like to stay with you and Susan. You remind me of my mother, and Bertha reminds me of—" I was going to say Jane, but I hesitated, and I fear that my face must have told them that I had a little secret. "Oh, wouldn't it be fine," said I hurriedly trying to get out of the difficulty, "wouldn't it be fine if you could teach me, and then I needn't be sent away anywhere else. I think I could learn more from you than from a master."

Mrs. Reardon smiled and said she would be glad to teach me if she was qualified ; it would be far more pleasant, and no doubt a more profitable, occupation than sewing.

"And then you should get such a lot of money." I said this as if it were really a matter of choice for her to decide ; "and you know," said I, confidentially, "I get a little pocket money, I have some now, my ma gave me a whole pound note when I was coming away, and Nellie Carberry gave me half-a-crown, but don't tell my aunt, and I could give some to you, and to Bertha and Susan."

Mother and daughter were greatly pleased with me. Bertha took my hand, and Mrs. Reardon kissed me and said in a most endearing way, "Oh poor, innocent boy, how little you yet know of the world."

All at once I felt myself on the most familiar terms, and asked, "How long have you been here with my aunt ? Do you like to live with her ? Is she kind, and does she often come to see you ?"

They both appeared embarrassed by my questions, but Mrs.

Reardon answered in a few moments, "We are not here many months, John; we came to live here because it is cheaper than where we formerly lived. We rent this upper room"—poor lady, she did not like to call it a garret—"from your aunt because we cannot afford to pay the rent of a better place. But this must answer—it will do well enough," said she, evidently trying to make the best of it, or to persuade herself that it was not so bad after all.

"Oh," said I, in unison with her idea, "its a beautiful place, a real fine room. I could live here all the time; I'm sure I could."

She seemed to understand my motive for saying this, and only shook her head slowly as if doubtful of my own belief in the assertion.

"Your aunt," continued she, "is kind enough in her way. If we cannot pay her our rent regularly, she will wait a few days by adding a trifle for her lenity, but trifles are sometimes large sums to us. Without her, however, we should not perhaps be entrusted with the goods we get to make up. Few know anything of us, and she becomes responsible for the safe return of the goods or dresses—or at least she says she gets some one to do so—but its no matter to us; if this was not done we might sit here and be idle; and we have to pay something out of what we make or earn for this security. Yet often by the time these charges are paid we have but little left for ourselves."

When I heard this I thought my ears must have deceived me. Was it really a fact that my aunt or any one else could think of making a charge for so paltry a favor; and now, from what I had already seen and heard, I began to think my aunt was very hard and unfeeling. "Could she really ask you to pay money for doing an act of this kind?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, ma, you must tell him the reason," said Bertha.

"I shall," replied Mrs. Reardon. "Your aunt told us that any money she got this way was not for herself; but as she is a religious woman, and what she calls a 'missionary collector,' she seems to think it her duty to ask and accept money from the poorest persons—and get it every way she can—to send the gospel to heathen lands."

"My aunt is wrong in doing that," I said at once. "If there were no poor people in the streets the money might be sent to the heathen. I often heard my pa say that it was a delusion—almost a crime—to send missionaries at great expense to foreign countries—that the poor there were not so wretched as our own—while there is so much distress and suffering at home; and ma, who is as charitable and religious as any one in the world, says the same; and that any money we can spare should be given first to the poor who are at our doors."

"Your ma is, I think, quite right," said Mrs. Reardon.

"But," I continued, "do you think my aunt would ask you to help to send away Methodist missionaries if they knew you were a Catholic. Susan," said I, lowering my voice, "Susan, you know, told me you were one; but that my aunt hates them."

"Your aunt does not know what we are," said Mrs. Reardon; "she never cared to ask me. I don't suppose it makes much difference to her where she gets the money so long as she gets it; but I should be sorry if she were to dislike us on account of our religious opinions. We were brought up in the Catholic Church, and therefore we believe in it."

"Just what Shawn used to say." I had an idea that everybody knew Shawn. "He used to say that people were Protestants, or Catholics, or any thing else, just as they were brought up to believe, and that they can't help being such; but that they should not be blamed even if they found reason to change their opinions afterwards. He thinks very religious people are the

most prejudiced, and that my aunt is what he calls 'bigoted;' and I'm afraid she would dislike me too if she knew I was a Catholic.

"And are you a Catholic?" asked Bertha and her mother almost with one voice. "I am." They seemed pleased and surprised at my acknowledgment, but I now felt that I had been very incautious to admit so much; yet as I did not like to tell them that it was a great secret, I merely said that my father was a Protestant, but that my mother, and sister, and myself, were Catholics.

I then gave them a little sketch of my history similar to what I had given Susan, and I know they were sorry when they heard that I had only a few days to remain until I should be sent away. I already began to feel much attached to them, and regretted that I should soon be obliged to leave. They seemed to have a great liking for me, and I was warmly invited to spend as much of my time with them as I possibly could. Before I left the room they recommenced their sewing, which must have been constant and fatiguing, and as I looked on for some minutes as these two kind creatures stooped over their hard task-work I said: "You should not sew so much; indeed you should not. You ought to go out more every day, a pleasant walk by the river would be so cheerful, and I will ask my aunt to let me go with you. Ma used to tell us that whenever she sewed for a long time at once it made her head ache and her eyes feel sore." I had scarcely spoken these words when I heard a sigh. I looked up; Bertha's face was turned from me, and her mother's eyes were already filled with tears. I could see the glitter of those "pearls of sorrow" on her cheek, and I felt grieved, for I feared that I had said something to hurt their feelings. Mrs. Reardon put her handkerchief to her face, and when she removed it a sad smile only remained to tell me that I had touched

some tender chord. She replied with a subdued voice : " alas, my dear, we must sew—our task is before us—we must sew, for we cannot go out when we will. While the sun shines for others we have to stay here in the shade. We must stoop at our work whether our head aches, whether our hearts are sad, or whether our eyes grow dim."





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE POOR.—PIOUS PASTIMES AND PRAYER.

WHEN I left these kind friends I went to my own room. I felt no inclination to go back to Susan or to say a word to any one else. What I had just seen and heard set me thinking, and I sat for an hour or longer on the side of my bed looking vacantly at one spot on the floor, and trying to understand why it was there was so much difference among people ; why so many, who did not work, were wealthy and lived in fine houses, had carriages, servants, comforts and luxuries in abundance, and to whom every one seemed ready to bow and pay the greatest respect, while men, women, and even children, who were obliged to submit to very severe and constant labour, had scarcely a proper shelter from the weather, were poorly clad, had an insufficiency of food, and who were almost generally considered menials, if not inferior beings, by the wealthy. Why should one class thus have every worldly comfort, and another class be forced to submit to harassing deprivations ? The natural rights of the one I considered ought to be equal to those of the other, and when I tried to account for the inequality between them I was unable to come to any other conclusion than that it was caused by some kind of injustice ; how, or in what way, it was beyond me to determine. Circumstances seemed to be so formed that certain persons would become rich and remain so, although

living in the greatest extravagance, while the far larger number, do what they could, would be miserably poor and dependent. This appeared to have been the course of things as long as I could remember, and though I had heard of the various efforts of benevolent persons, and of what the clergy were trying to do, yet it happened that nothing done towards the correction of this state of things was yet sufficient, or that the proper remedy had not yet been applied.

Dwelling on this subject it then occurred to me that the very best people I ever knew were among those classed as "the poor." There was Shawn, with his great natural ability, and with his thoughtful inquiring mind, kept by circumstances, which he could not have controlled, in comparative ignorance, without a foot of land, or a house to put his head in, which he could call his own; a mere servile dependant without a shilling beyond what was required for his daily wants. There was the kind and loving Nelly Carberry, a representative of the servant class, who might perhaps feel no actual want while she had health and domestic employment, but, let these uncertainties fail her, and she would be left to rely upon the charity of a selfish world; then there was poor Susan, an innocent creature, so innocent that I believe she never suspected any one of doing her an intentional wrong, who scarcely thought herself deserving of anything more than the pittance she earned, who had a heart that was one solid lump of goodness, but who was only a wretched drudge—almost a slave—poorly fed, poorly clothed, most unkindly treated, and, from all I could see, liable at any moment to be turned adrift to perish in the streets; and then there were such persons as Mrs. Reardon and her daughter, estimable individuals who had perhaps once been in good circumstances, who were evidently educated, if not accomplished, but now reduced to a condition of respectable poverty which in

their case was most pitiable, and often felt more keenly than that endured by the beggar wandering along the highway.

Ah! alas, what of the beggars?—the beggars in the streets, the homeless outcasts that are almost abandoned to starvation—what of these? And how many of such unfortunate creatures do actually starve and die every year for want of food? Oh what a harassing thought this was to me! As long as I could remember I used to come across these. I could go scarcely a dozen yards from our house without meeting some one with sunken cheeks asking for bread, and when I gave to one, others would follow soliciting the merest mouthful. They were to be found almost everywhere; even in the city, where they were liable to be arrested and carried off to the poor-house. They used to wait every day at our door for my mother, who never sent them away without some relief. I never yet, like some, had got so accustomed to beggars that I could pay no heed to their cry. Their importunities always excited my pity; and I never was able to forget the scene I witnessed when the poor old woman—whom I have mentioned before—was forced into the poor-house wagon and borne away before my eyes.

And then there was another class of beggars scarcely less to be pitied. The men, women and children, that begged for work or for something to do to enable them to buy “a bit of food;” the class who were as yet ashamed to beg for bread but who were willing to do the meanest service for the meanest recompense. What a sad state of things! What a deplorable condition of civilized society! People wanting work and wanting bread! Ah me, would it be always thus? No wonder that thieves and pick-pockets should be so numerous; no wonder that robbers should prowl along the highways; no wonder that women should become degraded; no wonder that vice and crime should prevail, and that violence and even murder should be so

common when human beings were urged on to infamy and maddened and infuriated by deprivations and indignities from which common brutes were mostly exempt ! and what were the principal remedies tried so far by high priests and legislators for such existing evils—for such indifference to reproof, for such defiance to legal threats, or for such outrageous violations of the law of the land ? The stinted charity of the churches, the poor-house of the moral reformer, and the prison walls and elevated galleries of parliament.

Alas, alas ! this was how matters stood, but to me at the time, the mystery as to the origin of poverty, was as great as ever. The best explanation I had ever had was from Shawn ; it was something like this : There are twenty men on an island, and twenty loaves are produced every day, quite sufficient for the support of all if fairly distributed, every man having an equal right to a loaf. One of the men, however, who is very strong, rapacious, and violent, induces three or four of like disposition to join him, and then, disregarding the rights of their fellows, they regularly seize the greater quantity of the bread, and the subdued and terrified majority have to live as best they can on the remainder, or die unless they become servile to those who have defrauded them, and accept the merest crust as the reward of their enforced obedience.

One or more of my aunt's visitors had arrived. I went down stairs. I heard some one singing a hymn that I had often heard in the Methodist chapel. The voice, a woman's, was strange to me, and rather shrieky, very unlike the sweet, soft voices I had heard the night before in Mrs. Reardon's room. I listened outside for a moment or two, curious to know who the person was, when lo ! there stood in the parlor between me and one of the front windows the lank, angular form of Miss Nancy Ferrin, the lady above all others whom I now most dreaded. She had

her look partly turned towards me; she was alone, for it seemed that none other of the expected company had arrived, and I heard my aunt down with Susan in the kitchen.

Miss Ferrin, though a leading church member, was dressed in her best style, not in plain quakerish drab, but in a figured something, which was very showy. Her scanty black hair was set up in puffs; there were ribbons and bows among these, and a large back-comb to keep some of them in place—all introduced, I presume, for ornament as well as for use. A gilt chain hung from her neck, to which was attached a brass locket. Some yards of a bright red sash hung from her waist, and her long thin shoes were partly hidden in the immense rosettes which balanced themselves upon her unassuming instep.

This was the lady of my dreams, for I had often, of late, dreamt of Nancy to the exclusion of my mother, or Nelly, or of others I need not mention. She seemed to be greatly interested with whatever came within her reach. She lifted every article that could conveniently be raised and examined, turned it this way and that, looked at it on every side, and then laid it down to lift something else. Even while she held a book, or a box, or a shell, her eyes would be roving about the room in every direction with a prying scrutiny far exceeding any inquisitive curiosity that I might have exhibited on the day of my arrival. She still sung; she was evidently pleased with her voice or with the subject of the hymn, yet she seemed to get annoyed at the least interruption, for more than once when a buzzing fly passed her and flew against the window pane, she would go over and at once pursue it with her thin knobby fingers, and take apparent pleasure in crushing it to death. I afterwards saw her look up at the corners of the ceiling as if in quest of spiders for further manipulation.

Not wishing to be then seen by Miss Ferrin during my aunt's

absence, or to encounter her during her present destructive mood, I returned to my room to await the arrival of the other expected friends.

I somehow imagined that when my aunt's guests were assembled we should have to spend a very dull evening. I had an impression that they were all to be religious people, and that their manner and conversation would be demure and serious. I was surprised, however, to remark a great difference from what I had expected. Even strict class members of the Methodist Society had begun to see that recreation was necessary, and that innocent amusement might be indulged in; and, as if to make up for lost time, that a little harmless flirtation, which was only natural, might not be objected to; it would relieve religion of its more sombre aspect and make it far more attractive to many.

There was the Reverend Mr. Banner, my aunt's favorite preacher,—she called him "Brother Banner." He was young and unmarried, for he had only been on a circuit about two years, and was yet destined, she thought, to become one of the leading lights of the connection. There was Mrs. Harris, a stout, jolly-looking Methodist matron—my aunt's class leader—best known among church members as "Sister Harris,"—with her two marriageable daughters, and two young men who accompanied them; besides a young man and his sister who had become members after a late protracted meeting, all dressed in the height of fashion so far as their circumstances would allow. There was Miss Ferrin, another "sister," of course, and then there was Mr. Sharp, with his friend, a Mr. Wells, who, although reputed a worldlying,—that is to say one who did not yet care to become a church member, or even an ordinary believer,—was yet sufficiently interesting in looks and manner to awaken the sympathy of Miss Nancy for his sad con-

dition, and her anxiety for his conversion. It would be delightful for her to be the humble instrument—under God—of awakening one of his intelligent but careless and unconverted creatures to a sense of his lost condition by nature. I cannot say whether Miss Ferrin had ever seen Mr. Wells before, or whether she knew he was married or single. She must have taken it for granted that he was yet a bachelor, for she used many little arts to make herself attractive in his eyes, no doubt for his future welfare, and whenever he spoke to her she simpered in a peculiar way, and would, I think, have blushed were it possible for her to summon to her aid one of those evidences of maiden coyness which had probably forsaken her cheek for ever.

I sat in a corner of the room by myself and remained comparatively unnoticed by any except Miss Nancy. She glanced furtively at me two or three times, and then, as if I were not worthy of further notice, turned away, probably to engage the attention of Mr. Wells.

At an earlier hour than usual my aunt had a superb tea ready for her friends. There was no room, I suppose, at the table for me, and I was told I would get my tea in the kitchen with Susan. During the delivery of the formal “grace,” uttered by ministerial lips, an observer might be led to imagine that those about to partake of the good things spread before them were under the impression that the business of eating and drinking was one of the most solemn duties in which miserable sinners could be engaged. But *presto*, what a change! In a moment after this the most vivacious conversation sprang up. The young male members of the flock said smart things to the maidens, and made desperate attempts at wit. Plates and cups, and cakes and sweets, were passed backwards and forwards, and sideways and every other way which could give proof of the assiduous attention of the very polite brethren ;

while the well-filled mouths of the preacher and Mrs. Harris gave ample evidence that they, at least, did not consider there was anything which might be attributed to natural depravity in this kind of indulgence.

I must here acknowledge that before I went to get my tea in the kitchen, I was guilty of a little act which my aunt would no doubt call "exceedingly wicked," and a proof of what I could be led to do in my unconverted state, had she detected me in the act of transgression. After the tea things had been removed from the table, I saw her put aside the sugar, butter, cakes, and preserves, and then, while she was deluging the well-drained tea-pot for the benefit of Susan and myself, I noticed on a side table a large piece of currant bread which she had overlooked, and impelled, I fear, by some natural failing, I immediately thrust it under the side of my coat and walked away with it.

Susan was not long making her little arrangements for our tea. It was a new thing to have any one partake of a meal with her, and she was greatly pleased with my company. I waited until everything was ready. Not even on my account had my aunt added anything extra to the ordinary kitchen fare except a bit of butter about the size of a walnut, but I was scarcely seated before I pulled out the currant bread and laid nearly the whole of it close to Susan. Poor thing, how surprised she looked. "Eat it," said I; "eat it, Susan, quick; I want to go up to the parlor again." No doubt she thought that my aunt had given it to me, and I was delighted to see her bite into the most delicious piece of bread she had ever tasted.

"Good, isn't it?" said I, smiling; "that's right, eat it up quick."

"Oh! master John," said she, taking a moment's breath, "isn't it!"

"'Tis," I replied, "but don't say anything to my aunt about it, and maybe I can get another piece."

I venture to say that Susan had never had such a meal before. She would have given me most of the nice bread, but I positively refused to touch a bit more than I had already taken. I waited until every morsel of it was devoured and then I ventured up to see what was going on, and as my aunt in her hurry had not missed the piece of currant bread, I took my place again in the corner.

The preacher had just commenced an address. The guests sat around the room; Miss Ferrin next to Mr. Wells. The Rev. Mr. Banner was about thirty years of age, a low-set, rather slovenly looking man, with an expression of meek cunningness on his shaven face. He assured them, in a kind of long-drawn, diffident voice, "that it was a special privilege—he pronounced the first syllable *pry*—to meet the brethren that evening at the so-she-al board; that it was a privilege to meet where they had met; that he had had many privileges; that through the kindness of many dear sisters in the Lord, he was, he might say, beset with privileges, he humbly hoped not to his disadvantage; he humbly prayed that they might not be besetments to affect his usefulness. As Christians we were all privileged more or less—privileged to a much greater extent than the people of the world—yea, were not our privileges abundant—what was our plain duty then, but to use these privileges to the glory of God!" This was mostly the burden of his short remarks. When he concluded, Miss Ferrin gave a long sigh, and somebody said "A-men," in a very sepulchral voice; all, however, seemed to be edified and eager to take advantage of the privilege of another pious flirtation, and as time was precious there was no delay.

While some were eagerly engaged debating how they should

commence, one low-sized young man stood behind the door and amused himself greatly by stealthily sticking pins into any one who came near him, or within his reach, and as some unlucky individual, smarting under momentary pain, rubbed his arm or his shoulder, or some other part, there was a laugh, which all seemed to enjoy. After this the ladies got together, and a piece of ribbon made into a bow was fastened on the breast of each, the color of no two pieces of ribbon being alike. Then a little band-box was placed on the table, and every gentleman was requested to turn aside his head, put his hand into the band-box and draw from it a neck-tie. These were also of different colors. He had first to pay a shilling for this privilege—the money to be applied to the missionary fund—he had to wear the neck-tie and keep company during the evening with the lady, old or young, who wore a bow corresponding to the color of the article he had drawn out, and a laugh would be often caused at the ill assortment of couples. This kind of lottery is yet a preliminary proceeding at what is called at certain re-unions among the Methodists “neck-tie socials.”

When the couples were thus formed, it chanced, much I think to their mutual dissatisfaction, that Miss Ferrin and my aunt's husband, Mr. Sharp, were to be associates for the evening. Some kind of a game of forfeits was then to be played, and Mr. Sharp being the oldest gentleman present, was, evidently much against his will, obliged to sit on the floor with his eyes bandaged and his knees drawn up. All in the room turned their backs to him and stood around him in a circle. The forfeits such as scissors, penknives, handkerchiefs, ribbons, rings, and even locks of hair, were placed near his hand, lifted one by one, set up at auction, and knocked down in the usual way to the highest bidder. As no one could see the article which was offered, the auctioneer not being permitted to describe

it, the bidding was generally spirited, and the proceeds also devoted to the missionary fund.*

The last game, if such it can be called, was that of "volunteers." A temporary screen was put up in a corner, and volunteers called for. Any lady who wished to serve the cause went and stood behind the screen and named her own price for allowing a gentleman the privilege of kissing her.† Every lady in the room thought it her duty in turn to take up this cross for the great object of missions. The youngest and best looking, as a general thing, charged of course the highest price—this was any way a matter of option—some charged a shilling, others but sixpence. I think every one of the ladies volunteered—my aunt even went—but no one that evening seemed so startled when a call was made for volunteers as Miss Nancy Ferrin; she affected to be almost shocked, and hesitated some time before she went behind the screen. Her modest charge, scarcely made audible, was however but sixpence, yet she was rewarded by a visit from only the preacher and Mr. Sharp, who I presume fancied it was incumbent on him to take up another cross in order to fulfil his evening's engagement with his bashful associate.‡

There chanced to be no religious discussion that evening with

* Those who have attended "Socials" will admit that little, if any, exag-
geration has been used in this description.

† "Mr. Moody is laboring at Baltimore. Chief among the evils in the churches, he said in a sermon last week, are church choirs—ungodly men and women who happen to have good voices, and often drunken organists. Mr. Moody, denounced the methods employed in raising money by church fairs. Lotteries, voting, and raffles were encouraged. The young men now, instead of going to a low gambling den could go to God's church and gamble. Actually, at one church fair, the sum of twenty-five cents was charged for the privilege of kissing the handsomest young woman in the church—presumably to help the work of God."—*Toronto Mail*.

‡ A Rev. friend informed the author that he saw a screen put up in the vestry of a church for such a purpose.

regard to predestination, election, reprobation, eternal punishment, or any other disputed point. The only objection raised with regard to the proceedings was by my uncle's friend, Mr. Wells, who was said to be a kind of free-thinker. He did not approve of the manner in which the money thus collected was to be appropriated for foreign missions; he said he would willingly attend "necktie socials" every night in the week—Sunday nights not excepted—provided the funds arising from such pious pastime would be expended for the relief of the suffering poor at home.

The Rev. Mr. Banner, however, contended that as the money belonged to the Lord, it could not be laid out to a better purpose than by sending the gospel to the benighted heathen. It would be better that a thousand mortal bodies should suffer for want of food than that one precious immortal soul should, for lack of knowledge, perish eternally.

At the request of Sister Harris, backed by her fair daughters, it was arranged that next week's "social" should take place at her house. A verse of a hymn was then sung, a short prayer and the blessing followed, and nearly all present separated under the impression that they had taken another step in religious and intellectual advancement.





CHAPTER XXIV.

AN ATTACK AND A RESCUE.

BEFORE my aunt left her room next morning, Miss Ferrin was nearly all over the house. I was awake early and heard some one going like on tip-toe from one apartment to another. I opened my door a little and saw her pass; she had the same prying look that I noticed the previous day. She was plainly on a search, and would not have hesitated to examine every pantry and cupboard in the house had they not been securely locked—a habit of my aunt's, who would hardly trust any one in her closets. Thus, apparently foiled, Nancy went over to a window and began to amuse herself again by singing hymns and killing flies.

In a minute or two I heard a great chattering. I peeped again and saw Miss Nancy standing agape in front of the parrot—she had not seen it until now—which appeared to be much excited by her intrusion, and he turned around and back again, taking a number of the most lively side-steps on his perch. Miss Ferrin, half-frightened, stared at the apparition as if she had just been detected in the act of taking off something that did not belong to her, and I was greatly amused to see her grow almost alarmed when the bird with his loudest voice commenced his accusation, “What the devil are you at? What the devil are you at? What the devil are you at?” “Get

out, get out, get out," and the moment she attempted a reply or explanation, the parrot expressed his scorn, "You be blowed, you be blowed, you be blowed." Just then my aunt entered. She fondly rebuked her pet, and after giving him some food and water, and listening a few minutes to his amiable prattle, she led the disconcerted Nancy away.

I had the privilege of being allowed to sit at the breakfast table with Miss Ferrin. She gave me another of her furtive glances, and addressed a few words to me of no particular importance. Were it not for Shawn I felt that she would have taken pleasure in exposing my duplicity then and there. She made a few inquiries of Mr. Sharp relating to his friend, Mr. Wells, and mentioned her regret that so nice and respectable a person should be a free-thinker.

"Pray don't mention his name," said my aunt, half peevishly. "I never saw one of his kind that hadn't a scowl upon his face as if every one of them was already branded by some fiend from the pit. Not one."

"O Kate," remonstrated Mr. Sharp, "you do the man great injustice."

"Do I? You know I don't. I told you more than fifty times that that man was no companion for you or for any other Christian person who had any regard for his good name. You seem to care nothing for the scriptural cautions we have against encouraging an intimacy with unbelievers. Not you, for you already approve of some of his vile opinions, and from all I can see it won't be very long until you are sunk as low as he is himself."

"Well, Kate," urged the rather passive Mr. Sharp, "you are really very uncharitable. Mr. Wells is—"

"Don't tell me what he is! I say don't," said my aunt, imperatively.

"Well, you know he is one of the most charitable men in town; all say that," pleaded Mr. Sharp.

"All? All do not, no, nor half a dozen besides yourself. Charitable? His charity is a curse to them that receive it. Men of his way of thinking hide their deceit and rottenness behind a cloak of charity—a mere flimsy rag. They go about to deceive the unwary. I don't want the man here. Luck nor grace won't follow from his visits. I won't have him. I'll see to that. The caution is, 'receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.' You have done both, you heed not the warning; but for the future if you will keep the society of the wicked, it shan't be under my roof.—There."

Poor Mr. Sharp remained silent, but evidently not convinced by her declamation.

Miss Ferrin, with a most languishing affectation of piety, intimated that our pity should be extended to such persons not yet brought from nature to grace. It was our duty to pray for them; and it was plain that she would be delighted could she be appointed a missionary to her dear friend, Mr. Wells.

"Pray for them," said my aunt, scornfully. "You may as well try to pray a hole through a stone wall as attempt to pray them into a belief of our simple truths. It's bad enough to have to deal with deluded Papists, and to be mixed up with them in a family connection (here Miss Ferrin gave a side look at me which was peculiarly significant), but I believe it's even worse to deal with an unbelieving gang that are now getting so numerous and so bold here and there, and everywhere else."

As Mr. Sharp had to go his office I left the room to the ladies and paid another visit to the kitchen. Susan as usual was glad to see me. Miss Ferrin had already been down with her, and she wanted to know who the strange lady was. "Missus' friend," she said, "looked at everything around, more

'an missus would herself ; she counted every pot and kittle in the kitchen, an' then she wanted me to tell her who the people up stairs was ; she heard them talking I b'leeve, an' then I told her all about them."

From what I had already seen of Miss Nancy I was satisfied that she would not be easy until she went up to see Mrs. Reardon and Bertha, and not wishing that the visit should be unexpected, I stole up stairs again, leaving my aunt and Miss Ferrin still engaged in the parlor.

I found Bertha and her mother busy at work ; they had been sewing since daylight and had to remain up the previous night until it was very late. Mrs. Reardon looked rather poorly. She complained of a bad headache and loss of appetite, but was unable to take the rest which she so much needed, or the outdoor exercise which I had yesterday recommended. They were, they said, obliged to have a new dress ready by noon for a young lady who was going to attend a church fair, and who would admit of no delay ; not even out of pity for them. Unless the work was ready according to promise they would have to forfeit one-third of the price they were to get for doing it, and as they could not afford to lose so much they had to hurry in order to try and accomplish the task for which they ought to have been allowed more time, and much greater remuneration.

However they were glad to see me, and requested me to stay a while ; the time, they said, did not pass so heavily when I was with them. I tried to amuse them by giving an account of what took place in the parlor the last evening, and of the manner in which my aunt's pious friends had enjoyed themselves. I told them about Miss Ferrin, and that they would soon have a visit from her.

I had only finished the words when I heard a cat-like step on the stairs, and in a moment or two afterwards some one

rapped and raised the door-latch almost at the same instant, and without further ceremony in walked Miss Nancy Ferrin.

When she entered she seemed neither to recognize me nor any one else. Her eyes first went around the room in every direction—lest something should suddenly escape or fly out of the window—and then they fastened with a broad suspicious stare upon the mild, pale face of Mrs. Reardon; then she glanced at Bertha and me.—“Morning ma’am,” said she, again fixing her eyes sharply on the elder of the two ladies. She then helped herself to a chair, without noticing Mrs. Reardon’s reply, and drew near the table.

“Busy, I see; busy,” said she, taking a little time to examine the material on the table; “nothing like being busy—‘How doth the little busy bee, improve each shining hour,’—that’s the way; exactly so,” and while she repeated this part of that well-known verse in a kind of sing-song voice, her piercing look was turned from mother to daughter, and then let rest on the mother again.

Mrs. Reardon appeared to grow a little disconcerted under the basilisk eye of her visitor.

“Yes, you’re very busy, continued Miss Nancy; “nothing like industry. Well, really, that’s a nice piece of stuff,”—again she handled that on the table. “And so this is your business now? I say *now*, for I think I’ve seen you before—don’t know me I suppose? I work at this business occasionally myself, and I once sewed for a day or two at a house where I think a lady like you was employed as a kind of governess.”

She waited for an answer, but poor Mrs. Reardon became nervous and merely said, “Indeed, I cannot now recollect.”

“Oh, perhaps not—I may be mistaken.” She paused a little, still keeping her wicked eye upon the intimidated woman. “But, let me see,” went on Miss Ferrin deliberately, “didn’t a

lady very like you once live at Passage, and hadn't she a child—a daughter—bless me how she's grown!—very like this young lady?" and Nancy made a most formal bow to Bertha, who deeply blushing now drew closer to her mother, who at this moment became herself greatly disconcerted, and while in a very depressed state could only say to her, "Really, madam, you have got the advantage of me."

"Madam? Yes, yes, I see, I'm madam," retorted Nancy, evidently amazed at being supposed old enough to pass for a "madam." "You don't know me—of course not. You're Mrs. Reardon now, but the name of the damsel I knew who was so remarkably like you commenced M—a—r, Mar,—can't you put the other three letters, my dear?" said she with an air of mock suavity.

There was no reply to this impertinent question, and as Mrs. Reardon was now scarcely able to sit up in her chair, I went and stood close to her also, fearing she would drop to the floor.

"Cannot, can't? Well, that's strange! How forgetful we can be sometimes," said the impudent spinster. "Still you know I may be mistaken—just possible—but, as you may not know the remainder of the name, I will display my learning, and spell it out for your benefit—t—i—n, tin, now put the two together, the easiest thing in the world, and you have—Martin."

Mrs. Reardon, now rather pale, had to lean her head on Bertha's shoulder. Her lips looked parched and her eyes were partly closed. As it was I began to feel indignant at the boldness and the extreme rudeness of the intruder. She must have noticed this, for she immediately turned her attention to me.

"And you here too, my pretty lad? Well I know you visit strange places sometimes, places your father wouldn't suspect you of entering; and you can dandle a thing like that too,

occasionally," said she, pointing to the little black cross on Bertha's neck. "Take care, my blooming boy, that he doesn't find you out some of these days."

Resentful as I almost felt I could make no reply. I did not desire to say a word in reference to a subject which she must have known I did not wish to have introduced. She looked again at Mrs. Reardon, and all at once affected to be very sorry for having mentioned anything unpleasant. It was quite probable, she said, that she might have been mistaken, mistakes are so easily made. With her—Mrs. Reardon's—permission, she would however call again—they could talk the matter over quietly. She should like to have a dress altered and to put a trifle in her way, and give a further explanation if necessary; and then, after having made a profound obeisance, the hateful creature left the humble apartment.

How I pitied poor Mrs. Reardon! Bertha, in tears, was clinging to her mother. They sat sobbing near each other as if trying to hide the cause of their grief from every one else. Did Bertha yet know of any such cause? Was this the first time that she had seen the shadow of some hidden sorrow of her mother's? At that moment part of the verse I had heard them sing came to my mind—

"Scarcely else than scorn will be,
In this cold world for you and me."

There seemed now to be some meaning in this. Could that innocent girl give an explanation, or had she, like her mother, a misgiving that the tattler and mischief-maker who had just left them would take a wretched pleasure in doing them some great injury? "God help us, child!—God help you!—God help me!" was faintly ejaculated by Mrs. Reardon. Bertha still wept and sobbed, my own eyes were brimming over. What I had just heard and witnessed pained me most acutely; but I

could be of no service. I felt that I ought not to remain a mere spectator of the distress which I could not alleviate ; I went away unperceived and hastened down to tell Susan, in the hope that she might do them some gentle service.

My aunt and Nancy Ferrin went out again on some kind of a missionary collecting tour. Miss Nancy delighted in pious duties of this kind, for then she and other ladies had the privilege of calling on persons, and at places, on whom or where it might not be deemed proper to visit for any other purpose. I heard her ask my aunt to go with her to Mr. Wells ; they could drop a word in season, and the shilling or half-crown of an unbeliever would go as far to spread the joyful news as the same amount from one of their own kind. But though my aunt was aware that unbelievers were regularly solicited, and that the weak-kneed among that class were, for the sake of appearances or for some other reason, almost always ready to give a donation for religious purposes, yet my aunt was consistent in her refusal to call on Mr. Wells ; he was a free-thinker, whose oath would not be taken in a court of law, and the further she kept away from such-a hateful crew the better. Had she not Scriptural authority for shunning those who "loved darkness rather than light."

Oh how I suffered while I sat alone in my room. I had a foreboding that the heartless Miss Ferrin would never rest until she had told some dreadful story about the poor harmless lodgers in the garret, and that she would some way prejudice my aunt against them. While Envy generally attacks that which is superior to itself, Scandal can pick the bones of a king or revel on the carcase of a beggar. The traducer who was now among us, seemed, from all I could learn, to have been feasting all her life on social rottenness. A flippant tongue freighted with scandals was what had gained her access to many a house-

hold, and my aunt, no way superior to many other pious persons, could at times be very much interested while listening to the recitals of personal laxity or of family foibles, given of course with the usual caution as to secrecy. I felt that we were now indebted for this unhappy visit of Nancy's to the promise she had given my aunt to tell her some "news," and I had but little doubt that this news would have seriously affected my mother were it not for Shawn's timely interference. The discovery therefore of Mrs. Reardon and her daughter seemed to be the very thing which was wanting to supply the place of the malicious report which was at first intended to be conveyed by Nancy Ferrin.

Susan, I fear, neglected her work that day in order to be a ministering angel to those who had affliction of heart. All she had to bestow were mostly but words of unaffected tenderness, yet these might be called inspired; for at the moment of delivery they seemed to rekindle hope in the despondent. The formal promise of ostentatious philanthropy may be grateful to the distressed, but the gentle whisper of Susan had some mysterious power which could enliven the sorrowful soul. Towering on high the forest tree may be looked at as a thing of strength and beauty, but, when it bends to the gale, the humble spreading bush will give more shelter to the shorn lamb. The sympathy of the poor and lowly is often far more touching than the pity or benevolence of the great.

From the length of time that Susan passed with her friends I was satisfied that she was doing all in her power to comfort them. She had barely got back to the kitchen when my aunt returned, who, as soon as she discovered that the house-work had been partly slighted, commenced rating Susan again, and finally threatened to turn her out of the house. As usual, the poor girl made no reply. I tried to make some excuse for her

and share the blame, but my aunt appeared to be very angry—I feared for some other reason—and she paid no heed to me except to insist pettishly that I should learn every verse in one of the longest chapters of the Bible by Saturday night. This was the first time since I left home that she had given me such a task. She must have thought it a punishment—and it was—but I had only to submit.

That evening, while Mr. Sharp was smoking his pipe and quietly looking over a newspaper, I saw my aunt and Nancy Ferrin go up stairs. For some unaccountable reason I suspected at once that they were on the way to Mrs. Reardon's room, and when I judged they had got to her door, I stepped up lightly after them. The dress, which ought to have been finished by noon, was yet lying on the table. Bertha's eyes were still red, and her mother, with face pale as ever, was reclining on a little couch in a corner. I stood just outside the door unobserved; in fact if I had gone straight into the room my aunt would have hardly noticed me she appeared to be so excited. She went over and stood in front of Mrs. Reardon and gazed vindictively for a moment or two at her as if to collect all that was harsh or unfeeling in her own nature that she might give the prostrate woman her mightiest blow.

"Tell me," said she, in a loud angry voice, "tell me, you infamous baggage, you prostituted wretch, tell me why you have dared to enter my house under false pretences and to impose on me as you have done."

"I have not deceived you," replied Mrs. Reardon, in a feeble voice; "you are mistaken. O, Mrs. Sharp, this is very unfeeling!"

Bertha screamed and ran to her mother, but the half-fainting woman could make no further reply.

"Come, speak out; none of your acting," demanded my

aunt, in a still louder voice, while the infamous Nancy stood close at her elbow.

"O, Mrs. Sharp, pity!" said the now trembling Bertha; "my ma has done no wrong, she is very sick indeed; she will speak to you when she gets a little better."

"She's an imposter," almost shouted my aunt, whose excitement was now greatly increased. "She's an impostor, and you are another—one of her own training. Good God! just to think that I should have a strumpet and her bastard for months together here, even here under my very roof, and not to know it."

"O, Mrs. Sharp, O, Mrs. Sharp," cried Bertha, coming forward with large tears rolling down her cheeks. "Oh pity my ma, you see she's sick and you know we are very poor."

"Poor?—its false. She earns her money easily and in a different way from what I ever expected. That vile street-walker is not poor," shouted my aunt, and pointing contemptuously to Mrs. Reardon who still mute could only give her accuser a look of mild reproach.

"Patience, dear Mrs. Sharp, patience," said Nancy Ferrin in a lower voice, as if desirous of restraining my aunt; "perhaps the person can explain."

"I want no explanation, I will have none! She's guilty!—she's an infamous woman—I'm ashamed of what I have done. I shall be disgraced for having offered such a wretch and her hussy not only shelter but for having given her assistance and actual encouragement. But the ingrates shall stay no longer, they shall march out of this at once."

"Do, Mrs. Sharp, do please have some pity," again entreated the weeping Bertha. "What have we done?—Oh, please have some pity!"

"My pity is that you shall pack up and leave here in less than an hour," was my aunt's fierce reply.

"They shan't, by G—," shouted a lusty voice right at my ear. I was really startled. Miss Ferrin affected to be much amazed, and my aunt turned a look of the greatest contempt upon the unexpected intruder.

"They shan't budge one inch out of this house, by heavens, if I know it," and a heavy fist came down with a sudden blow on the table, startling the sick woman and making the very room tremble.

Could it be possible ! Right there was a man who was the very last I should have expected to see or to hear at such a time. There stood Mr. Sharp so unlike his ordinary self ; he had heard Bertha scream and had hurried up. There he stood defiantly, with his hands clenched by his sides, his head erect, and resolution stamped on every feature. I could have hugged him at the moment, he seemed to be such a perfect hero in my eyes, and I think Susan, who had also followed us up, could have done the same had she given way to her strongest impulse.

"They shan't leave this, I say," said he, in a voice loud enough to be heard across the street, and looking with the greatest determination into the eyes of his wife whom he had so often allowed to control him. "I believe your abominable charge is as untrue as the source from whence it came"—("Oh dear," suddenly exclaimed Nancy Ferrin, pressing her hand on her breast over the spot where a heart should be),—"I believe it to be false, but, even if there was the least truth in it, would that be the way to treat one of the fallen, or one of the unfortunate of your sex ? I am satisfied that nine-tenths of such poor wanderers are urged on to infamy more by the heartless indifference, or the lofty touch-me-not sentiment of women, than by the treachery and depravity of men. What is your religion, or your humanity, or your womanly feeling worth, if instead of trying to reform, you persecute ; if instead of showing pity, you

reproach ; if instead of offering shelter, you cast the so-called unclean thing from you ; and leave poor, weak, friendless women to be shunned by her pharasaical sisters, to be inhumanly treated as she wanders through the streets, and to be despised by a selfish, unfeeling world. That's the way with most of your ranting hypocrites. You are ashamed if not disgraced, you say, because you have harbored these poor people, who, I believe, are better at heart than thousands who make arrogant pretensions, but whose sins are yet unknown or hidden under an ample cloak of sanctity. Well, then, I shall harbor these two persons as long as I can pay the rent of this house, and so long as I do, the house is mine, and I say again leave here they shan't," and down again came his fist on the table.

I never saw my aunt so quickly or so thoroughly subdued. She knew the man with whom she had to deal, and that he was then in one of his rare fits of independence which could not be trifled with.

"Please leave this room," said he to his wife, in a rather imperative manner, opening the door wide at the same time ; and, to my perfect astonishment, my aunt and her evil angel walked out without saying another word.





CHAPTER XXV.

BROKEN VOWS.

HOW many thousands have had to pass from the stage of life without having once appeared in the character for which they were most fitted, and which might have made them eminent forever! How many have to act a subordinate part, while others, far less gifted, stand out conspicuously as principals! What numbers have to live a lifetime without the needed opportunity of proving what they are capable of doing when the right impulse arouses the heart or the right trumpet blast reaches the ear! Who would have thought the quiet, unassuming, and rather submissive Mr. Sharp capable of acting such a heroic part as we had just witnessed, were it not for the opportunity he had thus had of proving what was in him and of exhibiting the latent magnanimity of his nature?

Ah me! how grateful I felt. This, I think, was the noblest scene I had ever witnessed. I seldom called Mr. Sharp "Uncle," now I would have been proud to call him "Father." He took Bertha's hand and went and sat close to her mother, and then, in the kindest manner, he gave them every assurance that they should not again be disturbed. He said that as no ordinary apology could atone for the outrage which had just been committed, they might remain where they were until doomsday; and, furthermore, that from that day forward, not one penny of

rent should be accepted from them by him, or by any one for him. They must not, he insisted, hesitate to accept this trifling privilege, as in fact they were conferring a favor on him by remaining in the house.

I saw no more of my aunt nor of the dreaded Nancy for the remainder of that day ; they must have shut themselves up together for mutual consolation. Mr. Sharp left the house and did not, I believe, return until late at night. I spent an hour or so with Susan. The poor frightened girl really thought that Nancy Ferrin was the worst person she had ever met. She would have liked to make some excuse for my aunt's conduct towards her poor lodgers, and to throw all the blame on the intermeddling Nancy, who she thought was the originator of the slander and the cause of the whole trouble.

Before dusk we went up again to see Mrs. Reardon and Bertha. They were glad to see us, Bertha particularly so. Her mother greeted us with a sad smile. She seemed to be weak and very much depressed. She sat languidly with folded hands, looking thoughtfully at the little fire which appeared to do its utmost to throw a cheerful glow within its narrow limits and as far around as possible. Susan and I affected to be in good spirits, and tried to cheer our friends, and I have no doubt that we succeeded better in this than any one else could have done at the time.

There was scarcely any allusion made with reference to my aunt, to Miss Ferrin, or to the disagreeable scene which we had witnessed a few hours previously, but Bertha could not refrain from expressing her warm regards for Mr. Sharp, and though her mother did not say much, she evidently felt most grateful for his interference and unexpected kindness.

We sat with them until it was late—long past my usual hour for retiring. I was the principal speaker, and I think I be-

came almost eloquent while telling them about what I had seen at home, about my mother, and Ellen, and Nelly Carberry and Shawn—for some strange reason I could not say anything about Jane. In my desire to entertain them I related one of Nelly Carberry's ghost stories, and then I told them what a disbeliever Shawn was in everything supernatural. I described my brother William, what a fine-looking fellow he was, how good-natured and clever, how he was going to be sent to sea and to be made a captain or an admiral; and then I gave them an account of how Nelly could tell fortunes by looking at the grounds remaining in the bottom of a tea-cup, how she had proceeded to tell what William's fortune would be, how she had become disconcerted at what she had seen in the cup, and of how she had refused to reveal what she fancied she had discovered regarding him or some one of the family.

On a former visit to Mrs. Reardon I noticed that Bertha seemed to take an interest in hearing me speak of my brother, but now when I mentioned the circumstance of Nelly's supposed discovery in relation to his future, she really became concerned; her face wore a sad expression as if this had really affected her to as great a degree as anything that had taken place among us that day. She then made some inquiries about him—when was he going to be sent away?—had he a desire to go to sea himself?—couldn't my father keep him at home and make him a head clerk in his office? Poor Bertha! she asked these and many other similar questions which I was unable to answer; but in place of this I told her in a kind of confidential way that I knew she would like William very much if she once met him, that perhaps he might come here in a day or two with my father, that if he came I would bring him up to see them.

"Oh, not up here!" said Bertha, hurriedly, half ashamed and blushing. "I would not for anything have him see us here."

"Why not here, my dear?" said Mrs. Reardon. "We have no other place. If William is like his brother we should be glad to see him in this room or anywhere else we may be. But," continued she with a sigh, "we shall not be long here, and we cannot tell yet where to find our next refuge."

Next morning I was delighted to hear that Nancy Ferrin was going to cut short her visit with my aunt in order to spend a day or two with another pious sister in town. My aunt was not quite so well pleased that her friend, from whom she had expected to hear a story—which she had at first fancied might relate to my mother, or to something or somebody in our family—was going to leave her without unfolding any other dreadful piece of news besides that which merely related to the "common seamstress" in the garret. She was as indignant as she yet dared to be against her husband for his unwarrantable interference with her lodgers, and for his rude offensive treatment of her visitor. Nancy Ferrin's further stay was rendered impossible by Mr. Sharp's almost direct charge against her, but short as that stay had already been it was sufficiently long to fill my aunt's ear with a scandal which caused her to be incensed against her harmless tenants, and, for the first time, to hear artful insinuations even against the fidelity of her husband.

This is what Nancy Ferrin's short visit had so far accomplished. Her mission here and there seemed to have been fulfilled by the circulation of reports injurious to the character of some person—man or woman—none could have been more unmerciful to her own sex; and now my aunt herself had to pay the penalty for having made so much of one who had a tongue so vicious; for while she had listened to slanders which were directed against others, she little expected that, at her time of life, any person could torture her with jealousy or make her suspect that the quiet domesticated Mr. Sharp could only be incited

to do what he had lately done for Mrs. Reardon simply because he had become entangled in the toils of that sorceress.

These were the seeds of discord scattered by the reckless Nancy around my aunt's threshold. They unfortunately germinated, and like weeds maliciously sown among flowers they sprang up and became rank and unsightly, hiding from view the modest plants which had hitherto been so agreeable to the eye. Nancy Ferrin had been dealing in scandals all her life, her evil reports had spread far and wide and had made many a home unhappy. Certain of her false statements had left an indelible stain for the eyes of some ; while many of her detractions had been conveyed in such a manner as to render it almost impossible to have them ever explained away. Give False Rumor a good start and lightning cannot overtake it.

After Miss Nancy Ferrin had taken her departure, my aunt, not having as yet resumed dominion over her husband, of whom she had now become dreadfully suspicious, had all at once made a confidant of Susan. She really felt the need of a household spy. She blamed herself for being out of the house so much, thereby giving that wretched seamstress in the garret so many favourable opportunities of meeting her dupe. Notwithstanding what had taken place she had made up her mind to get rid of her lodgers as quickly as possible, but in the meantime she must have some one on the look-out to prevent further intercourse between the guilty parties—between her husband and the vile woman who had led him astray.

Susan was of course greatly surprised at my aunt's unexpected kindness and familiarity, but she could not be made to understand why it should be necessary to watch the comings and goings of Mr. Sharp, whom she considered a very kind and rather quiet man. He had been always good to her, he had never scolded her, and the only trifle of money she had

ever received in all her life was from him. Besides that, she had never seen him in Mrs. Reardon's room but once before, and that was when some repairs were needed. However, she had to satisfy my aunt by saying that she would keep a close watch, and that if she saw Mr. Sharp visit Mrs. Reardon's room again she would immediately report the circumstance.

In order to try and convince Susan that Mrs. Reardon was not what she ought to be, she gave her a history of that person, a history, no doubt, greatly exaggerated by Nancy Ferrin's unscrupulous distortion of facts; but the truth, which I long afterwards had from an unquestionable source, was as follows: A respectable shopkeeper, of the city, named Martin, was left a widower with a daughter, an only child named Anna, who at the time of her mother's death was about thirteen years of age. As Mr. Martin was in comfortable circumstances and greatly attached to his daughter, his whole attention was almost given to her. His great desire was to be able to lay something by for her benefit, to give her a good pious education, and afterwards to see her well married and comfortably settled in life. In return, Anna was most devoted to her father, she was gentle and obedient, and did everything in her power to make him as happy as she possibly could.

Two years had passed since the death of her mother, and Anna not only made wonderful progress in her studies, but became quite womanly in her appearance, was reputed to be one of the most beautiful girls in the whole city, and was already sought after by persons much above her in social position. More than one distinguished artist craved the favor of a sitting so that her angelic features might be transferred to canvas; and in the convent where she had been educated, one of the loveliest portraits which adorned the walls of that religious

retreat, was that of Saint Agatha, an almost exact copy of the sweet face of Anna Martin.

Mr. Martin had an old friend named Ringdon, who had two sons. As it is rather common with many of the better class of Catholics in Ireland, and indeed what may be said to be more frequent among the very lowest orders of that religion in the same country, is the strong desire of parents, especially of mothers, to have a son of theirs made a priest, whether or not, he may be, mentally or otherwise, qualified for such a position, or whether he should object to such a calling, it will make but little difference; he has generally to submit—some parents have succeeded in getting two sons ordained—and to secure this object the greatest pecuniary sacrifices are made, and often a family have to suffer privations so that every shilling thus saved may be appropriated for the education, outfit, or other expenses required, in order that this pious paternal ambition should be gratified. These humble efforts have been so successful that a large number of the Catholic clergy of Ireland have frequently been scornfully denominated the “peasant priests.”

Well, Mr. Ringdon had, like many others, sent his son, his first-born, to the College at Rome. He had already been absent three years, and was soon expected home to fill a clerical appointment in one of the city chapels. The younger son was intended for business, and as Mr. Martin thought he would make a suitable companion for his daughter, he encouraged their intercourse with a view to their engagement and subsequent marriage. Anna, wishing above all things to see her father contented and happy, received her suitor's attentions with some favor, and though she felt that he had not as yet absolute possession of her heart, still she was willing to become his wife in a few months, hoping that in time she could bestow on him her full affections,

The arrival of a newly ordained priest in the city caused no little sensation among certain pious Catholics, not because such arrivals had been few or far between, but chiefly on account of the reputed learning and abilities of the Rev. John Ringdon or "Father Ringdon," as he was more generally known. All flocked to hear the great preacher; and afterwards, when the time came, he was appointed to deliver the Lenten Sermons. These were said to be magnificent efforts in defence of the doctrines of the Church, and his fame became so great that, night after night, people of all persuasions came to listen to the natural and educated orator, many more on account of his rich copious language, of his well chosen words and classical sentences, than of his explanations or defence of transubstantiation, purgatory or penance; of confession, absolution or invocation; of prayers for the dead, or of the universal authority of the Pope and the priesthood, or of the amazing claim to infallibility set up for the Vicar of Christ, the head of the Catholic Church. Not only were the young preacher's words powerfully attractive, but his appearance also won for him the affection of the greater number whom he addressed, and women especially crowded around his confessional to receive his spiritual advice and absolution.

Among the many who came for that purpose was Anna Martin. She had been brought up with the strictest notion of her obligations in this respect. Young as she was, she had not, like others, paid formal visits to the confessional once a year—the furthest limits assigned by the Church for such duty—but particularly since her mother's death she had gone frequently, often once a week, and now during this Lenten season she had regularly heard the great preacher (whom she had previously met at her father's house), had either become so delighted with his society, or so religiously excited by his persuasive words, that she had chosen

him in preference to all others as her father confessor. From a weekly Saturday visit to the confessional of her old spiritual adviser, she went now almost every morning to the chapel to whisper in Father Ringdon's ear her simple sins of omission and commission, and to listen in return to his gentle voice of comfort.

This continued for some time. People remarked her punctuality, and praised her for the example she was showing to others of her own age and sex who exhibited such indifference to this great Catholic observance. Her father grew still prouder of her beauty, of her virtue, of her obedience, but above all of her faithful constancy to her Christian duties. The young man who sought her hand was persuaded that such a wife as she would make would be an especial blessing; and his brother, Father Ringdon, had been heard to say, that he thought her already fit to be classed amongst the holiest of angels.

Soon after this it was observed that Anna never entered the confessional until all others had been heard and had mostly taken their departure; then, that she remained with her confessor longer than usual, and that when all was over she generally managed to have Father Ringdon accompany her home. Then again, towards the commencement of Holy Week, it was remarked that while her visits to the chapel grew more seldom, the priest did not discontinue his daily visits to her house, remaining for hours together, even to the neglect of some of his duties; and, what caused much disappointment, he pleaded severe indisposition, an affection of the throat, for the discontinuance of his nightly sermons, and instead of going to the chapel to listen to the priest who supplied his place, he would be found enjoying the society of the beautiful Anna Martin, at her father's house, by whose fireside he had now almost made his home, and to which Mr. Martin had made him most welcome.

About this time it was noticed by some who called occasionally to see Anna that she seemed very thoughtful, and frequently rather absent-minded. She made vague inquiries and gave singular replies during conversation, which was often quite disconnected; and, strange to say, she avoided, as much as possible, meeting the priest's brother to whom, it was known, she was formally engaged, giving as an excuse that as Holy Week had commenced she would prefer not to receive any visitor except the priest himself. And then again, near the middle of the same week, her father, having once hurriedly entered the room, found her in tears, and though he felt somewhat surprised at first, he made, however, no inquiry, attributing it to the fervour of her religious feelings awakened during that particular season.

Holy Thursday is one of the most particular days of Holy Week. The altars of the Catholic Church—generally the small side altars—are then most extravagantly decorated with additions of silver crucifixes, gold and silver plate, spangles and sparkling gems, and pendant chains of the most precious metals. Then there are added beautiful ornamentations—silken hangings, folds of silken gauze-work, and festoons of the richest lace. Wreaths of flowers are artistically introduced so as to produce the greatest effect; pictures of saints and angels are hung in certain spaces; and then when more than a hundred lighted tapers, in chased silver candelabra, nearly surround all the altar, the appearance of the whole showy arrangement is heightened; and while the display may look garish and unmeaning to many Protestants who go to see such sights out of mere curiosity, it is singularly brilliant and attractive to most Catholics, often greatly exciting the devotional impulses of members of the Romish Church.

As these extra decorations are mostly designed and added by

Catholic ladies, it was thought very singular that Miss Martin had not offered to assist in this pious pastime. On one or two former occasions she had made herself very useful in this respect, and her admitted taste enabled her to give suggestions such as made the altar which she desired to beautify remarkable beyond most others for the chasteness of its embellishment. And what was more extraordinary, neither was she nor Father Ringdon seen in the chapel at any time on this particular Holy Thursday.

Mr. Martin was one of the most constant church-goers in the city. He had heard every one of the powerful appeals of Father Ringdon—the young pillar of the Church, as many called him. He had attended his chapel every night during Lent, and when inquiries were made about the absence of his daughter, by having a ready excuse for the non-attendance of his guest, the priest—all ardent Catholics find no difficulty in overlooking the defaults of their clergy, and in making a plea for their transgressions—he could easily give a reason why his daughter remained away. He had left them both at home. She could, he said, scarcely spend her time better than in the society of one so eminent as her spiritual adviser—one whom she would be soon able to call “brother;” but as his health would not at present permit him to be out at night, it was only proper, under the circumstances, that she should remain with him.

When Mr. Martin returned home a few hours later he found things in a state of confusion. Young Ringdon, the priest’s brother, to whom his daughter was engaged, had just entered the house before him and was quickly pacing up and down the room in a state of great excitement. He seemed either unable or unwilling for a time to make any reply to the inquiries pressed upon him. Father Ringdon was not present, and when

at last Mr. Martin called aloud for his daughter, the young man, with a look of despair, handed him a note. It was in Father Ringdon's writing, and was very brief. It informed all concerned, that as he, the priest, could not live without Anna, he had resolved to abandon the clerical profession and make her his wife. For this purpose he had that evening induced her to leave home—he took all the blame. They were now on their way to France, and if he could not get a dispensation to free him from his priestly vows and permit him to marry, he would, in despite of all ecclesiastical laws, become the husband and protector of her who had forsaken all for him.





CHAPTER XXVI.

NEITHER WIFE NOR WIDOW.

GOOD FRIDAY.—A melancholy day to many. Melancholy to the religious man who feels it necessary to mortify the flesh by severe abstinence and by rigorous self-denial in submission to the commands of the Church respecting this great traditionary fast day, but truly melancholy to him whose poverty and severe bodily privations rob him of all reverence for clerical decrees, who must of necessity fast because of the want of the commonest food, and who is obliged, in consequence of certain old-time social regulations, which keep some rich and others poor, to go about hungry on fifty other Fridays during the year.

Good Friday.—A day of dainty fasting to wealthy penitents, yet a day of fat feasting to men like Jonny Timms, the little nailer of Cat-lane, whose Protestant principles were so strong, and whose hostility to popery was so great, that on no other day of the year—Christmas not excepted—could such a joint of roast pork—for size and fatness—be found upon his table. Jonny Timms—Protestant Jonny as he was mostly called—not being overburdened with hard cash, could seldom afford to place meat enough on his board even for the Sunday dinner of his family, but no matter for that, fat pork—roast—he would have on Good Friday should he be obliged to pledge his best coat, or

his only blanket, for the money to buy it. And, further, though Jonny liked an occasional holiday—to enjoy a pot of porter, or a game of ball—still he seemed determined to make up for such lost time as well as he could by always working harder on every Catholic day of obligation—of which there were many—particularly on the day set down as being the most solemn for penitential abstinence in the popish calendar; and though he could whistle a number of tunes while at his work, yet those who passed his little forge on a Good Friday could hear Jonny Timms whistle nothing but the “Protestant Boys.” Jonny has long since passed away. Though his once glowing coals have become cinders, and his forge tumbled down, yet his prejudices remain hot and sparkling as ever, and other Jonnys have taken his place to whistle defiance to the Pope and to eat meat on the great fast day.

Good Friday.—Gloom in the Catholic churches; gloom in the nave, but sunshine on the roof. Gloom in the aisles, but sunlight in the streets. Gloom upon the denuded altars, but brightness on the tree-tops. Religious gloom in monastery cells and in the minds of ascetics, but outside, Nature, robed in her blue sky, seemed to care not for the sickly shadows of man’s creation, but joyfully beckoned to the glowing hills, laughed at the sparkling waters, listened to the singing birds, and looked down smiling, like a fond mother, on the early spring flowers; and then she seemed as if standing with outspread arms on a mountain height breathing out perfume, and crying out in ecstasy, “Hail to the sunbeams! All hail to the glorious light of heaven!”

Still, on this particular Good Friday, there is more than the ordinary gloom in the chapel within whose walls the warning voice of a young priest had so lately resounded. The little side altar which appeared so resplendent last night now seems to

shrink from observation under its bare black pall—its scant Good Friday covering—as if it were trembling with fear, or shivering with cold, or, as though the dim light which is almost reluctantly permitted to enter is yet strong enough to expose the shame which has been cast around the place, and which is but too perceptible on the faces of the officiating priests and of the people who have resorted hither to witness their solemn ceremonial. There is a reason for the shame which is apparent, and there is another cause for mourning which is more depressing than that which has made the day itself one for penance and austerity. The priest has left his altar ; the shepherd has left his flock ; and he who was the mightiest prophet has become an idolater—the worshipper of a living idol.

The departure of Father Ringdon was already known ; an account of his alleged disgraceful act had appeared in the morning papers ; and as nothing can be a cause of greater shame or mortification to a steadfast Catholic than gross misconduct clearly proved against a pastor of his Church—so clearly proved as to leave no chance for a trial of the usual attempts at exculpation—the sudden flight of the young priest with a female member of his flock, was felt to be particularly scandalous. Celibacy, though not having been always enforced by the Catholic Church, has long been the rule for the Catholic clergy ; and were a priest to take a wife at the present day, a natural, prudent act—and there is no scriptural command against it—he would forthwith be excommunicated and his marriage pronounced infamous.

It was then that certain Protestant publications came out with renewed strength against auricular confession, pointing out the danger attending the private visits of unmarried young women to the confessional of ardent young priests ; and it was then that even many sedate and sober-minded Catholics—wise after the

event—condemned Anna's father for having permitted her to change her spiritual adviser of advanced years for a father confessor who had but so lately arrived at manhood. The clergy, after all, were but men, and then numerous instances were given where some of the wisest and holiest of God's servants—kings, and priests, and prophets of the Lord—had fallen—alas from what a height and to what a depth—when left to the wiles of artful, designing women.

Time passed and nothing was heard from the fugitives. It had been said that Mr. Martin had received a letter from his daughter craving his forgiveness. But from the hour that he had been fully assured of her deep disgrace he never more mentioned her name until he lay on his death-bed, about six months only after she had left her early home. The idea that he could be so deceived by a priest, and deserted by the daughter in whom his heart had been centred, caused a shock from which he felt he could never recover. The bare idea of her marriage—if one there really had been—to a person in holy orders brought on the most terrible depression. Such a marriage he considered a greater outrage on maidenly propriety than common prostitution. Other Catholics, he well knew, would believe the same, and assert that any woman who could deliberately seduce a priest from the allegiance due to the Church was one who should be classed among the very lowest of her sex ; he also knew that while there would be nothing but eternal scorn for her, the hand of charity might at least be extended to him. Therefore he was aware that whether there had been a formal marriage or not it would be all the same to many ; that no matter what sorrow or repentance followed from the wretched act, pity or forgiveness would not be extended to her ; she would be hated and shunned wherever she became known.

Day after day, dwelling on all this, the poor man became

almost reduced to a state of imbecility. At times he would curse the false priest ; at times he would pray to Heaven for his forgiveness. At times he would lock himself in a room and shun every one ; and often he could be heard weeping until the night was far spent. As he scarcely took any food he was soon reduced almost to a skeleton ; he became grey, stooped, and careworn, and it was evident that he was fast approaching his end.

One night he lay awake and appeared as if occasionally listening. He told those who sat with him that he heard footsteps, then he sprang up as if some one had entered the room, and he exclaimed "O Anna, welcome home !" and then, while clasping the fancied form, he sank slowly back and passed away with his vision.

The priest's brother, to whom Anna Martin had been engaged, felt such a degree of shame for the way he had been treated, both by his own brother and by her who had promised to become his wife, that he enlisted in a regiment ordered off on foreign service, and was never heard of afterwards.

Ten years had sped away since the humiliation brought on the church by Father Ringdon, and the circumstance was almost forgotten. Many had died, many had emigrated, and comparatively few remained who cared to bring the matter again to remembrance ; and priests and people once more extolled their Church as being the sole exponent of virtue, purity and truth. In the meantime the principal actors had been left to their own resources. It was not long until the absconding priest found himself surrounded by difficulties of the gravest character. When he left Ireland the total amount at his command was scarcely a hundred pounds, and she who had left her home to be with him had little more than a hundred shillings. Nothing came to her after her father's death, for he had bequeathed all that he was possessed of, as a kind of sin-offering, to the convent

in which his daughter had been educated, and to which she had been such a reproach.

In Catholic France, where they remained nearly seven years, Father Ringdon dared not admit that he was a priest. At first he had some difficulty in finding employment. An engagement as a teacher of English in a seminary was all they had to depend on. This position he held until he was discovered by an Irish priest who chanced to visit the institution, and his dismissal immediately followed. In three years from that time, after many struggles, Anna was left a widow with her only child Bertha. She had seen her husband—as this was what she had ever claimed him to be—interred by strangers in Belgium, and then she took her way to England where she remained a few months, and then, warned by the necessity of increasing her scanty resources, she thought it best to return to Ireland, in the hope that she could find some person in the land of her birth who would give her advice or assistance.

As she had scarcely an expectation that a Catholic would dare to do anything for her, or for her daughter—who would be considered illegitimate,—she made herself known to a pious Protestant lady with whom she had been on terms of intimacy many years before. This friend advised her to resume her maiden name, and the better to escape recognition—as she was much changed in personal appearance—that she should for the future be known as Mrs. Martin. The lady had sufficient influence to find her a situation as a visiting governess in a house at Passage, where there were four or five children to instruct in plain English branches. She remained here for some time, until the family moved away; then, having a strong desire to return to her native city, she went back only to find herself treated with more than scorn by the few to whom she had made herself known.

In this extremity she had to appeal again to Protestants ; it was quite useless to approach persons of her own faith. A letter from her friend at Passage obtained her employment as a seamstress. She found it necessary to change her name again, this time to Reardon, it being as near to that of the priest's as she thought it prudent to adopt. Her circumstances, however, became poorer by degrees, until at last, having become someway acquainted with my aunt, she hired her garret and set up for herself the humble business of a dressmaker.

As Nancy Ferrin had once been employed to sew for a day or two in the same family at Passage where Anna had been engaged after her widowhood, under the name of Mrs. Martin, the vicious spinster had, by means peculiarly her own, heard some vague report against her, and by her usual unscrupulous exaggeration, had made it appear to my aunt that her lodger, Mrs. Reardon, was under the so-called protection of a person in the city ; and not only that, but she had also led my aunt to suspect for the first time the faithfulness of her husband, and to believe most foolishly that Mr. Sharp had certain private reasons of his own for making such a show of resentment on behalf of his special friend, Mrs. Reardon.

Saturday came at last. It was a bright afternoon when my father and William entered the room where my aunt had left me sitting alone. I was the only one there to receive them, and was glad they came. I heard from home again, and received a few lines from my mother and Ellen. My father was not expected until a later hour, and my aunt was out on one of her collecting tours, as a final report of sums total begged and squeezed out by her and others for missionary purposes was to be read out at a great missionary meeting to be held on the following Monday night ; and she was, I knew, very anxious to have her name announced as being the one who had succeeded

in collecting the largest amount for the benefit of the heathen.

William was in fine spirits, and looked better than ever. My father had to go to his office, and my brother and I were left to ourselves. I should like to have made some inquiries about Jane, but I felt unable to speak to him on the subject. For the last day or two since Nancy Ferrin's departure I felt dispirited and someway did not like to intrude often on Mrs. Reardon who was still poorly, but as I might possibly have to leave them on Monday, I interested William so much by what I said to him in their favour that he expressed a strong desire to know them. We went first to see Susan in the kitchen. She was delighted, and would have kept us talking, but as it was Saturday, and knowing that she had a great deal of extra work to do, I did not want her to get an extra scolding, so we went off, promising to visit her again.

I told William to remain in my room while I went up to tell Mrs. Reardon that we were coming together to call on her. She seemed improved, and Bertha blushed when she heard my communication. In a minute or two I introduced William. Though he was by no means forward, he was not so diffident as many lads are, and he made himself at home in a short time. Mrs. Reardon was very much pleased with him, and, as for Bertha, she seemed abashed, and she blushed deeply when he took her hand; and while he kept talking about one thing or another, in his usual vivacious strain, I could see her steal glances at him, and then, as often as he laughed, she seemed to listen as if the sound of his voice was music. After this they became the best of friends, and stood at a little window together, the light falling full upon their pleasant young faces. Bertha seemed to forget every trouble while she was shewing him her geraniums and a little budding rose that had had her particular care.

I sat at the table with Mrs. Reardon, who was again at her usual work. I could not help telling her how much I disliked Nancy Ferrin, and that I was surprised at my aunt for believing a word she said. I told her that Shawn and Nelly Carberry knew her well, and that she was one of the greatest tattlers in existence, and that if Shawn only knew she was here, and what she had done yesterday, he would soon make her repent of it. When I mentioned Shawn's name again Mrs. Reardon said that she now remembered a person called Shane Bawn who used to deal with her father long ago,—this was the first time she mentioned anything to me of her father. I was then satisfied, allowing for the change that time must have made in his looks, that Shawn was the identical Shane whom she had once known. I was glad of this, for though I could not communicate with him in the usual way by writing—as poor Shawn could not read a line—I could manage to send him word by William, so that he should interest himself in her behalf if Nancy Ferrin ever again attempted to trouble her. We spent an hour pleasantly together, and we promised to call again next evening when my aunt went to meeting.

On Monday morning I was told that my father and I would leave Ireland that evening. I was to be placed under the tuition of his brother, an English vicar. The packet would sail for Bristol about six o'clock, and I was to get ready. William was not to accompany us. He was to be prepared for sea; and sent for a few months to a nautical academy in the city; and Bertha as well as her mother seemed very much pleased to learn that he would call and see them every week or so. I promised to write, and asked them to let me hear from them in return. I had hoped that my mother would have come to see me off. I wished if at all possible to make her acquainted with Mrs. Reardon and Bertha, and to ask her as a great favor not

to be prejudiced against them, but to try and assist them in some way. However, as parting affected her very much, and as it was probable that my father did not wish her to leave home to see me at that particular time, all I could do was to write to her when I got settled at my uncle's in Bristol.

Fully an hour before it was time for us to leave, my aunt was so busy receiving visits from missionary sub-collectors that she had scarcely a moment to speak to me or to any one else. Bertha and her mother were much affected at our parting. Poor Susan clung as tenderly to me as ever Nelly Carberry had. And that night, when we were tossed about in the Irish Channel, and even when I was sea-sick, I thought of the crowd that was then probably assembled in my aunt's chapel, solely for the purpose of trying to benefit the distant heathen, and of how much more humane it would be for my aunt and other religious people not to look with such indifference on the poverty and distress around them, but first to try and help the thousands of suffering poor at home before lavishing the means, which could be made so useful for such a purpose, on missionary enterprises which were too often but of little credit to visionary propagandists, and really barren of any permanent benefit to the Christian world.





CHAPTER XXVII.

MY TEACHERS AT "ST. PHILIP'S."

ON our arrival at Bristol we were driven to a small neat-looking house in one of the narrow winding streets of that city. It must not therefore be taken for granted that it was a disagreeable street to live in, for it was kept remarkably clean, the other houses had a most respectable look, and as there was a little gravelled enclosure, fenced by an iron railing, in front of my uncle's place, with a tree at each side and a few others at the back, it was thus far more like a dwelling near the suburbs than one in the middle of a large town. For some reason my uncle had this residence called "St. Philip's;" and at one side, about ten feet from the principal building, there was a smaller one which was called the "Oratory."

My uncle, the Rev. Thomas Fairband, was a perpetual curate, or, I should say, a vicar with a fair income—perhaps three or four hundred pounds a year—and he was reputed to be very pious and charitable, permitting a number of poor persons to assemble close to the oratory every day at a certain hour for the purpose of receiving small benefactions out of sums supposed to have been collected by him for such as were in need. He was also enabled to bestow gifts in the way of food and clothing; and poor children were often supplied with slices of bread thinly buttered; and though the recipients were limited

to persons of his own parish, and more particularly to members of his own church, yet in severe cases he sometimes gave relief to others.

In personal appearance he was very different from my father. He was perhaps eight or ten years older, and was really an old-looking man. He was not tall; he was slight, and stooped. His hair was thin and fast becoming gray. His forehead was oblique, his eye-brows heavy, and his eyes were rather deep sunken. His nose was long and pointed, his mouth large, and his chin retreating. His thin, sallow face was closely shaven, and his long neck was wound to its full length with a white neck-cloth, not a particle of shirt-collar being visible. He wore a long black coat and a peculiar kind of vest—there was something priestly in the cut of these—his low-crowned hat with a broad brim turned well up at the sides, making this more apparent—and with his downcast look and the formal gravity of his countenance, he appeared to be—what he might easily be taken for—a type of the ritualistic priest of Britain.

My uncle was a widower without children. His household consisted of an old lady housekeeper, named Tracy; Mr. Dennis O'Callaghan, a late importation from Dublin, who was a kind of sexton, churchwarden, and sub-deacon—an ecclesiastical man-of-all-work in my uncle's church; an ordinary servant man, and his wife who was the housemaid. I was now to be included as one of the family, for, at the particular request of my father, arrangements had been made whereby I was to be placed under my uncle for an indefinite time to receive further scholastic and religious instruction, and, I presume, to be brought up a strict Protestant, with a proper contempt for the superstitious doctrines and practices of the Roman Church. My father and his brother had not I think met for a long time previous to this, and I have reason to believe that it was chiefly by

my aunt's suggestion it was decided I should be sent to Bristol. She, having been constantly suspicious of my mother's control over me, determined that I should if possible be kept away from popish influences, of every kind and degree, until I was sufficiently established in the faith to be beyond all chance of contamination; and to effect this it was therefore considered that my uncle, a well-known clergyman of the Church of England, in whose rigid principles my father had the greatest confidence, would, above all others, be the proper person to eradicate any erroneous idea concerning popery with which my mind might have been imbued by my mother.

My uncle received me kindly, but he scarcely smiled when he first addressed me. I was older looking than he expected. He said he supposed that I knew my prayers and catechism well, and he hoped I should be an apt scholar in the studies we should have to engage in. I replied that I should do my best to merit his approval; and then nothing more was said to me regarding prayers or studies during the short time my father remained with us.

The room set apart for me was in the top story. I was glad of this, for to my thinking it was one of the most pleasant in the house. It was well lighted, and on clear days I could get a glimpse of the distant river, and see the topmasts of the numerous vessels in port; still the view was not to be compared to that which I had had from the windows of the dear old big room at Cove. Most of the other apartments were gloomy—my uncle's very much so—and the parlor was so darkened by heavy curtains that it seemed to have been determined that no ray of sunlight should enter to disturb its religious shading. After the manner of Nancy Ferrin, I took a kind of survey of the place the next day. The library was fairly stocked, mostly with a miscellaneous collection of theological books, among

which were several works of the "Fathers," and volumes on Church History, on Church Councils, and on apostolical succession. There were also books containing lists of martyrs, and lives of saints, and narratives of well-authenticated miracles ; and there were pictures of martyrs, apostles and saints in this room as well as in the parlor, and in my uncle's room, in which was also a silver crucifix and a picture of the crucifixion. I thought it very singular at the time, that such things should be found in the private residence of a clergyman of the Church of England, and I tried to fancy what my aunt's surprise would be were she to make such a discovery. Strange to say my father did not seem to notice these things, for at that time he had the greatest confidence in my uncle. He evidently had taken it for granted that because he was in the house of a Protestant clergyman there was nothing significant in pictures or other objects which if discovered in a Catholic residence would be set down as being decidedly popish in their tendency. Since that time I have met with many so-called "staunch Protestants" to whom if Catholic doctrines, such as those on confession and absolution, were preached from Protestant pulpits, they would have been accepted by them without a murmur.

Everything went on like clock-work in my uncle's house. We had to get up very early. My uncle was in the oratory every morning by six o'clock, often before that time. It struck me that Mr. Callaghan was rather lazy, and did not care to be bound down to such punctuality ; he, however, managed to be there near the time, and generally to find some excuse if he were late. The housekeeper, I found, also attended ; and, from what I could guess, it occurred to me that after my father left us and things got settled again, I should be obliged to go there along with the others. We had breakfast at eight, dinner at three, and tea at six ; and all were expected to be, as Mr.

Callaghan used to say, "snug and comfortable" in bed by nine p.m. at the furthest. My uncle used to have light in his room after this, and I discovered that he remained up often until it was very late : sometimes he would go out even after midnight to attend a sick call—indeed, I think he solicited such requests—and, much I know against his will, Mr. Callaghan had frequently accompanied him. I may add in this place that on Fridays no meat of any kind was used at meals, and from what I had already seen I was under the impression that my uncle made that day one of abstinence by the omission of his breakfast or his dinner.

The Sunday my father remained at my uncle's was, to him and me at least, a real holiday. My uncle had engaged to exchange pulpits, as it is called, for the day with a minister a few miles out of town. We did not, therefore, accompany him, but we went out and had a pleasant ramble through the old city, and visited many interesting places. The next day my father left us for home. Though he was no way demonstrative in manner, yet I could see that he felt our parting. He gave me a kind, fatherly advice, and I felt determined, if possible, not to disappoint the expectations he had formed concerning me ; yet, still, at the last moment my dreaded secret again loomed up, and again I anticipated the indignation or the alienation which might follow its discovery, and what my dear mother might have to suffer in consequence.

As my uncle was very reserved—he was perhaps naturally so, I think he fancied that a clergyman should be particularly demure in manner, and sombre in aspect—I felt that there was a great distance between us, and, therefore, wishing for some person with whom I could be more familiar, I grew intimate with Mr. Callaghan, who was very unlike my uncle in most respects. Mr. Callaghan was one of the most vivacious per-

sons I had ever met. On account of his being a kind of ecclesiastical attache of my uncle, he passed for a religious man, but if he was to deny himself and take up any particular cross in consequence, it was generally one of the very lightest, and no more affected his genial spirits or his genuine humor than the wearing of an ornamental gold cross by a fashionable lady would tend to remind her of the sinfulness of dancing while so engaged in a grand ball room.

Mr. Callaghan had been partly educated for a Catholic priest, his parents wished him to be one of the pillars of the Church, but his natural inclinations being all the other way, he was permitted to have his choice of a profession, which permission was perhaps as fortunate for the Church as for himself. He must have been nearly or quite forty years of age when I first met him. He was about the middle height and somewhat stout, his face being of a Milesian cast, yet good enough every way, but, if anything, rather florid; still, his temper was by no means hasty, he was very good natured and socially inclined, and being fairly educated, he was on the whole a very agreeable person. His principal failing was in a little peculiar self-indulgence occasionally. He would keep in his room at certain times and complain of rheumatism, and my uncle was made none the wiser.

Of course I took Mr. Callaghan to be a Protestant. He was nominally one, just as I afterwards discovered that he was but nominally a Catholic, or even religious. Indeed, I think if circumstances had permitted, religion of any kind would have been to him a matter of the greatest indifference. He was a good mathematician and given to science, and whether his studies in these gave him a dislike for dictatorial teaching and assumed authority, or a kind of contempt for unproved statements or propositions—religious creeds of all kinds he

claimed to be full of such—the religious drudgery he had to perform was gone through in the most perfunctory manner. He, like a great many others, could not yet afford to acknowledge his real opinions, and in consequence of this, and the necessity he was under of obtaining an engagement of some kind, he had to appear what he was not in reality—he was not and could not be a believer in the doctrines and ceremonies of the most ultramontane branch of the English Church. Trained a Catholic, as he had been, among the most faithful of Rome in the Island of Saints, there were certain matters relating to church discipline and affairs of the altar with which he was quite familiar, and as it had been rumored that he had partly given up his belief in literal transubstantiation, and refused submission to the extravagant claims and pretensions of the Romish clergy, he was recommended to my uncle as being sufficiently Protestant—and perhaps sufficiently Catholic—to suit his purpose. As my uncle was one of the leading clergymen connected with the Church of England who had already been suspected of “extreme practices,” and as he was determined when things got more matured to act up to his convictions in spite of any inhibition, he needed such a person as Mr. Callaghan to initiate him into certain ceremonies and observances of which the Church had been despoiled after the Reformation, and which he had for some time considered almost essential in church service, and to the proper performance of clerical duties. Indeed, I now question if he would have very much objected had he been fully assured that Mr. Callaghan was a real true member of the Romish Church, for though English prejudice was strong against the so-called old faith, which but two or three centuries previously had been the faith of the Realm, my uncle would have adopted it far sooner than he would have acknowledged the validity of the “hateful dissent,” which was making such

annual encroachments, and alienating so many of the foolish and unwary. Mr. Callaghan being from Ireland was another recommendation in his favor, as my uncle held the Irish people in high estimation on account of the steadfastness of the great majority to their ancient religion ; and he therefore counted himself peculiarly fortunate in having secured the services of one who had bent the knee before one of the ancient altars, and whose ancestors had no doubt suffered for their noble fealty to the Supreme Head of the Christian Church at Rome, who, though having erred in some degree, was still worthy of veneration even from true English Churchmen.

The morning my father went away my uncle asked me to his room, and when we were alone he made a number of inquiries about our family matters at home ; he kindly inquired after my uncle the priest, and he dwelt particularly on our family creeds. Not being sufficiently acquainted at the time with his opinions, I of course expected that as he was a Protestant clergyman he would to some extent follow the course my aunt had generally pursued with me—that is while I was with my mother—and perhaps denounce everything connected with the Catholic religion. From his more gentle manner, and his milder disposition to that of my father, I however believed he would explain the errors of Rome in a less offensive way, and caution me as to how far I should allow myself to be guided by my mother's views on religious subjects. Instead of this course he praised her wonderful steadfastness as giving another proof of what the true servants of God could endure for their holy faith—still, in a great degree, the faith of every true Christian.

I was at the moment most agreeably surprised at his moderation, but I found it was something more than that when he assured me the religious belief which my mother held was nearer the truth than that to which my father or my aunt would

have me yield my assent. "Yes, John," said my uncle, "I can, I think, tell you what I could not yet tell your father; you should be proud of your mother, and so am I. From what your father has told me I see how things have been, and I can easily fancy how jealous he is, or has been led to be, of her influence over you in religious matters. I trust that that influence has had, after all, its proper effect. I know, to some extent, what she must have had to suffer on account of your aunt's very fanatical interference among husband and wife and children. How unfortunate! I hope, however, your coming here will not be to your disadvantage as much as your mother may suspect it will be. You shall have the pleasure of informing her that the change has been for the better. I have not seen her for a long time; she knows nothing as to my altered sentiments—neither, of course, does your father, from whom I have tried to keep the matter a profound secret—but now I may have the pleasure of communicating with her soon. I know you must have received a great deal of religious instruction from her, and I hope it will make a lasting impression. The fact is," continued he, lowering his voice, "a year or so after my ordination, the rector under whom I had the happiness to minister was a man who had a great veneration for the Old Church, through which even we have derived our apostolic authority, and following his example by casting gross prejudices aside, I have gradually become almost enamored with the doctrines which are denounced as Romish, and with the beautiful and significant rites and ceremonies of the ancient Christian Church, and though we cannot as yet avow ourselves, though we have to suppress to some extent our religious yearnings, and practise in private, as the saints did of old, the devout exercises which we consider most acceptable to God, yet there are many in England who think as we do. We may be called Jesuits, or what they will,

but the time is coming when Britain will shake off the yoke which she has worn since the so-called Reformation, and return to her first love."

He paused, and as I made no observation he continued, "There should be a proper spiritual Head. How absurd to have our present monarch called the Head of the Church? The reformers were reckless in pulling down, too much so, in order to satisfy the injured pride of one of the worst kings that England ever had. While popes, cardinals and bishops were denounced, the Church had an unordained profligate ruler for its head, and what has this country gained by the exchange? Has not the rapacity of our archbishops and bishops, and rectors and pluralists of all degrees more than equalled that ever incited by the alleged pride of a Wolsey? Religious orders and institutions have been abolished and despoiled by Round Heads, religious as well as political, and while the great round tables of our princely bishops groan under a weight of luxuries, there are few left to care for the poor but the despised monks and nuns of that Church which was once such a blessing to the humble and distressed. Fanatics at the present day, principally those who claim to be dissenters, think they are doing the Lord the greatest service by sending thousands of pounds out of this kingdom for what is called missionary purposes, leaving poverty at home almost unpitied; and while vast amounts are sent to the heathen, the prison-like dens of refuge erected for the destitute heathen at home, are languishing even for needed supplies. Pauperism is on the increase, and crime is festering and polluting in our very midst; and still the visionary Methodist or Baptist missionary comes to beg the pittance, which should be reserved for our own poor, in order to spread his poisonous doctrines in foreign lands. Our own Church, or that to which I nominally belong, has

been to blame for much of this, but there are some now in the ministry who are determined to go back to first principles, and among other things, as one of the chief Christian duties, to remember the poor at home.

Encouraged by what my uncle said, I told him how bitter my aunt was against almost every creed but her own ; how I had been obliged to learn long tiresome chapters of the Bible, and how strictly I had been trained by her to look on transubstantiation and confession, and absolution, and celibacy and other doctrines and certain rites, as being false and improper, and upon my mother's religion as a superstition, and upon the Pope as the Man of Sin.

"The Bible!" he exclaimed, "that's the Protestant's idol, one more to them in reality than the cross is or ever has been to the most ignorant Catholic. It may not be becoming in me to say anything against that book. I once, like others, used almost to worship it, but now I am convinced that it is not a suitable book to be placed in the hands of the uneducated or self-sufficient. I may consider it my duty to explain this more fully to you on some future occasion. Just fancy, the gospels were not written until very many years after the death of Christ—some even more than a century afterwards; therefore they cannot fairly be called the foundation or rule of our faith. The early Christians knew nothing of them, but they had the traditions of the fathers for their guidance as to doctrine and practice. Upon reflection I find that too much has been said in these wayward days against the doctrine and usages of the primitive Church. It is alleged that the doctrine of transubstantiation is a violation of reason and common sense, but sacred things cannot be judged by the feeble light of reason. This doctrine may have been carried too far, yet there seems to be authority for it. Confession has been mocked at by the

impenitent and turned into ridicule by illiterate preachers, but what is more natural for a person who is sincerely grieved for having offended either God or man, than to confess his fault—or his sin if you choose—and if one wishes to unburden his mind, in whom is it more reasonable to confide than in one of God's duly authorized ministers; for it should be widely known that in our ordination service we receive our warrant, "Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained." Ought not these formal words be therefore quite sufficient for all? There may be a Purgatory, there seems to be authority for this also. It is a reasonable, comfortable doctrine, and one, on the whole, of which I cannot disapprove. As for celibacy, what more suitable condition for a priest. How unseemly to hamper himself or the Church with a wife and children. I could say much in defence of other doctrines which have been repudiated, but I shall take another opportunity of explaining my opinions. The changes made at the time of the Reformation were too sweeping. There may have been abuses, but they might have been rectified by a different procedure. In hot haste too much was swept away, and too little left us; but the old doctrines and significant rites and ceremonies which once proved so consoling and edifying to thousands who have passed away to enter the bright regions of heaven, are coming into favor again, and it may not be many years until His Holiness the Pope shall be acknowledged once more as the spiritual chief by a majority of the British people."

"I have therefore, my boy," said my uncle, placing his hand on my head, "confided to you what I would not to your father. For a pious purpose I have had to dissemble and hide my views from him, so that if you have any preference for the religion of your good mother, you need not be afraid to acknowledge it to me. You are free to follow your own inclinations in this

respect. I only regret that my brother should have ever objected to your being brought up a Catholic; for surely it must have been painful to a gentle pious woman like your mother to see her daughter educated to one form of faith, while her sons were baptized in another. Even now for her sake I would prefer to see you a member of her own Church."

During the greater part of the time that my uncle spent in addressing me, my eyes were directed to the floor. I now raised my head, and looking at him with more boldness and confidence than I thought I ever could assume under the circumstances, I said, "Uncle, I am a Catholic. I shall confide in you now. I was baptized a Catholic unknown to my father. If he knew it, he would be very angry with me and ma, and perhaps never let us see each other again. I have told you all, and it must be kept a great secret."

He took my hand and smiled on me most graciously. "I am so pleased at this," said he; "you can be of such service to me. You, a genuine Catholic, a genuine Irish Catholic! How delighted I am to know this!"

I then gave him a short account of how desirous my mother had been that I should become a member of the Church of Rome, and of how I was baptized in the big room, and when I told him all, he assured me that my secret was safe; that it should be kept as sacred as if it were my confession.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

MY FIRST MATINS AT THE ORATORY.

WE sometimes fancy that we are taking precautions against a certain evil when we may be only unwittingly smoothing the approaches to the very evil itself. Our eager desires frequently run ahead of discretion, only to leave us among difficulties which we wished to avoid. Our intentions, like "vaulting ambition," often "overleap" themselves. The mariner wishing to shun rocks in sight, may be tempted further out among the waves to avoid the threatening coast, and while he sees wide sea-room, and, feeling more secure under the belief that he therefore has deep soundings, yet he may find his vessel aground on some hidden shoal when and where it was least expected; the unseen danger, far from land, proving at last, perhaps, more destructive than that which frowned upon him within reach of shore.

From what I have already stated it will be seen what my father's principal notion was in placing me under the guardianship and instruction of his brother. Taken up with other matters, and having the fullest confidence in my uncle, he would have paid but little attention to any stray rumour affecting the soundness of his Protestant principles. How far there was wisdom in his precautions, and discretion in the course he adopted, will become more apparent as I give a further account

of the principal teaching I received from my uncle, and of our every-day life and practice while subject to his ministerial influence and clerical supervision during my stay of some years at Bristol.

The next day, I think it was, my uncle informed me that as his time was greatly taken up in the performance of various duties, he had decided to give me over to Mr. O'Callaghan, who knew all I wanted to learn, or that would be most serviceable to me without going through anything like the strict classical training followed in most of our colleges and universities to the exclusion of more useful knowledge. Latin sufficient to enable me to understand certain subjects, or, in fact, certain prayers,—for in some cases he thought prayers in that tongue might not be inappropriate—would be quite enough. Theological classics, such as most of the Catholic priests are only learned in, would give me all the knowledge of that language which was necessary; there was no use in being encumbered with the solid contents of ponderous lexicons, or with that which in all probability would never be required. I should also receive instructions in other branches, and he, my uncle, would occasionally examine me in order to be satisfied as to my progress, and to be enabled to report to my father. Mr. O'Callaghan, he assured me, would be very happy to have me as a pupil, besides, he would on this account be a gainer in a pecuniary sense, for, my uncle said, he would have fifteen or twenty pounds a year, in addition to his salary, for his services as my teacher. “You and he will be one,” said my uncle, rather confidently. “Between ourselves I think he is still as much a Catholic as ever. Some men can never get beyond the prejudices of their early training, and I think Mr. O'Callaghan is one of them” (my uncle never omitted the “O” in mentioning his clerk's name). “Of course I can have no objection to this in his case. He is

an excellent person, I have great confidence in him, he has been of great assistance to me, and now, with your aid also, we shall be able to get on in the oratory splendidly. I say in the oratory, for as prejudices exist yet to some extent, we think it better not to practice, or even to introduce in the simplest way, certain rites and ceremonies in St. Mary's for a 'time'—St. Mary's was the name of my uncle's church—"we can do so freely in the oratory, we can explain their usefulness there; for none attend who have not, I may say, been initiated, and who do not approve of our so-called ritualistic principles.

I assured my uncle that I should consider it my duty readily to assist either him or Mr. Callaghan to any extent in my power. (I never used the "O" except on very formal occasions, or when using my tutor's name in my uncle's presence.)

"Yes, yes, I believe you will. Now let me see," said my uncle, reflectively, "you must know something already of Latin prayers—of course you must. Your excellent mother would have taught you some before your late baptism. First, then, you know how to bless yourself? Ah, how appropriate this form at the commencement of prayer or religious exercises! Try, please let me hear you."

He waited a moment in an attitude of attention and I commenced, "*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*"

"That's it," exclaimed my uncle; "that's the way to commence an invocation. What folly to object to such a beautiful preliminary! You know how to begin the creed, undoubtedly?" I placed my hand to my forehead and thought for a few seconds and then repeated, "*Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem factorem cœli et terræ.*"

"Capital, my boy," said he, slapping his thigh, "the very words expressed in the grand old tongue." He was all smiles, and evidently very much pleased.

"Now, once more," said he, "you have learned the *confiteor*, I'm sure?" I had no difficulty in remembering this and replied, "*Confeteor Deo omnipotenti, beatæ Mariæ semper Virgini.*"

"That will do, that will do," said he, without allowing me to say any more. He was quite delighted. "I declare, I am very much pleased. Why, we shall have no difficulty with our responses in the oratory. We shall commence there with you to-morrow morning, and your regular attendance with Mr. O'Callaghan will help us to add to our imposing service."

I must say that I was very glad to learn that Mr. Callaghan was to be my tutor, and I am sure he was as equally pleased as I was myself that I was to be his pupil. He said that we should get on famously together, that he should tell me a thing or two not generally known, and that, after a time, he should give me other problems besides those in mathematics to try and master. If left to my uncle's teaching, I should feel very diffident and should hesitate to ask him for explanations, or to assist me in my studies, but with Mr. Callaghan I should feel quite at home. I had already become quite a favourite with him, and I began to feel an attachment for one who appeared to take such a friendly interest in me.

There was another person by whom I was also regarded very kindly; this was the old housekeeper, Mrs. Tracy. She was a widow, and one of the most gentle, unassuming persons I have ever met. She was a lady in every respect, and I never saw a woman who had a more serene expression of countenance. She was most suitable every way to have the management of my uncle's house. She had known his wife—they had been at school together in their younger days—and she had lived with him since he had become a widower. The poor old lady felt that I was left, as it were, among strangers, and, perhaps on

that account, interested herself in many ways to make me feel at home and as comfortable as possible. She often spoke to me of my mother, and would tell me that no matter among whom I went or with whom I should become associated in after life, no one would come any way near to filling my mother's place. I think Mrs. Tracy must have suffered much domestic affliction. She told me that she had lost her husband many years ago—she always mentioned his name as if he were unequalled. The small amount that he had left her had been invested for her in some kind of a loan company, which had failed, bringing her and many others almost to poverty; and she would have been in very great distress were it not that she had most fortunately found a home in the house of my uncle. After this her greatest misfortune was the loss of her only son—a boy about my own age—near his fourteenth year. She would often tell me that I reminded her of him, and sometimes when we sat together, particularly should it happen that we were alone about evening time, if I chanced to raise my eyes, I would mostly find hers filled with tears, and her sad gaze resting mournfully on my face. I have often thought that it must be about the close of day that the saddest recollections come most regularly to the aged, and that sorrowful memories then bring back most vividly to those in the decline of life, scenes that have long passed away, and the forms and faces that have faded and disappeared forever.

Mrs. Tracy was, as might be expected, a close member of my uncle's church. She was, however, no enthusiastic believer like most of her sex. Her religious feelings were of the mildest type, and she went regularly to church, more because it was a long contracted habit than because she considered it a necessary duty. She valued religion more on account of its promises to restore the dear ones who had been lost—of the happy meeting of husband and child in some bright land which it assured

her—than of any personal need which she felt for religion itself. She would tell me, "I have done nothing very wrong that I can remember. I have never wilfully injured any person, nor have I any inclination to do so. I am not afraid to die. I often wish to depart because I have been told that I shall live again. But oh, immortality would be no blessing to me without those whom I love and from whom I have been separated. To live without them forever would be endless punishment, indeed. If they cannot be brought back again annihilation will be the greatest mercy."

I have since found that there are many like Mrs. Tracey, who estimate religion for its beautiful representations of future bliss. It is prized by most believers because they fancy that it gives as it were a photographic view of an actual land of pure delight, but how many would turn aside from the dazzling illusion could it be fairly proved that the fond picture upon which they gaze with such rapture is but a copy or re-production of some brilliant sketch of a frenzied imagination. Still, without such a proof, this fancy is to many a glorious reality.

I was in the oratory half-an-hour before the usual time on the following morning; I had a curiosity to see it. My uncle was there already busy making some arrangements, but Mr. Callaghan came lagging in just a few minutes previous to the commencement of the services. I was told they were to be this day more imposing than usual on account of the attendance of several new members. Having got there in good time I had therefore an opportunity to see at my leisure all that was to be seen in this almost private sanctum. It was a room not much more than thirty feet long, by about sixteen feet wide. There were two ordinary windows on one side, and two more at the end furthest from the door, and all had blinds closely drawn down. Between the two windows at the end there was

a small altar somewhat similar to the one I had seen in the big room at home, but instead of being covered with black it was vested with a white cloth on the top, and it was amply screened in front with silk of a light violet color, in the centre of which was the monogram I.H.S. wrought with golden thread. There were three silver candlesticks, holding lighted wax candles, on each side of the altar, and between these stood a silver crucifix about twelve or fifteen inches high. Over this, at the back, there were images of two small angels with outstretched golden wings, supporting a raised representation of the Virgin and Child surrounded by rays, and over this again were the words, in gilt letters, "Hear the Church." The only thing in the shape of a text which I saw was one on the side which had no windows, which read—"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." There was a kind of railing in front of the altar, and within this at one side was placed a faldstool for the use of the officiating clergyman; and from the door to the railing several plain benches were put at regular distances for the accommodation of worshippers. There was a porch outside the door, which was at one end, and within this sat my uncle's man, dressed as a kind of beadle, who was instructed to give admission only to regular attendants, or to such others as had received a ticket or permit to enter.

The place was, I should say, well filled on this occasion. Early as it was, fully five-sixths of those present were women, including Mrs. Tracey, the housekeeper. There were three or four old men, and a few boys, altogether more than thirty persons—most of them apparently of the poorer class. Three of the boys wore white albs; one was in red. Mr. Callaghan in a whisper humorously called him "the cardinal," while I was much surprised to see Mr. Callaghan himself almost hidden in a large white kind of surplice which buttoned tight round his neck,

and when he afterwards stepped behind my uncle, when it was time to assist in the services, he did so in such a jaunty manner and with such a serio-comic expression of countenance that I could scarcely keep from laughing, and my inclination to do so was further increased by the look of mock gravity which he suddenly assumed as if to reprove me for my unbecoming levity at such a time and on such an occasion.

There was a little screen placed in a corner at one side of the altar, behind which my uncle went to array himself—this I afterwards found was also a confessional. I say “array,” for he emerged from the little enclosure in splendid apparel, as unlike the sober-looking canonicals generally worn by clergymen of the Established Church as could be imagined. He had on a claret-colored soutaine. Over this there was a short white muslin frock which reached a little below the knee; it had wide sleeves, and the collar, cuffs, and skirt edge were richly embroidered and trimmed with deep lace; a violet colored silk *stole* with gold crosses and gold fringe at the end, hung from his neck, and with bent head and hands palm to palm in front, he approached the altar followed by his retinue, comprising Mr. Callaghan, the little “cardinal,” and the other boys in white albs. I was not included among the number, for as this was my first attendance at the oratory, I was merely requested to pay particular attention to the services in order to get an idea of the form of procedure at matins.

When my uncle got to the centre of the altar he made a reverential bow to the crucifix. Mr. Callaghan, who stood behind him, and the boys on either side, did the same—Mr. Callaghan did so, I fancied, rather too profoundly—and the congregation knelt. My uncle then, while muttering some words I could not hear, commenced the services by making the sign of the cross, all others following his example, and he said aloud as

a Catholic priest would at the beginning of mass—“*Introibo ad altare Dei.*”

This was responded to by Mr. Callaghan,—“*Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.*”

I must say that although I had been made aware of my uncle's opinions regarding Catholic rites and ceremonies, I scarcely expected that he would so openly commence his services, after the manner of the Roman Church, in a foreign tongue, and I looked on and listened with the same kind of curiosity that one would feel who was present for the first time at some strange unique exhibition.

My uncle then ascended the altar, made another bow to the crucifix, and turning to the people, he made the sign of the cross in the air with his right hand, while repeating the words “*Dominus vobiscum.*”

It seemed to me that Mr. Callaghan wore an odd expression of gravity while he emphasized his reply—“*Et—cum—spiritu—tuo.*”

A psalm and one of the epistles were read by my uncle standing with his back to the worshippers, and when he went to the faldstool to repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, the boy in red brought out a censer and censured the altar and the priest, and afterwards swung the incense towards the people who were still on their knees.

When all became seated, my uncle, instead of giving a sermon, next proceeded to explain for the benefit of all present—more particularly for the new members, who, indifferent, he said, to the contempt of scoffers and worldlings, had boldly taken up their cross to join the ancient and true worship of God—the use of some of the sacred things which were to be found in the oratory of St. Philip's, and the significance of them as well as of certain rites and ceremonies long

practised by the Mother Church—not so called, as was sneeringly said, because the Mother was therein worshipped more than the Son, but because it was the truest exponent of Christian faith and doctrine; and in speaking of such a worshipful personage as the Mother of God, he cared but little for any authority, secular or ecclesiastical, which denied the profoundest reverence to the Sacred Virgin.

First, he told them that in ancient pagan temples altars had been erected upon which worshippers had placed offerings or sacrifices to the Gods. The altar in the primitive Christian Church represented Mount Calvary, upon which the greatest of all sacrifices had been made, and that we in commemoration of this, still offer the mysterious sacrifice in our communion service; and from the altar we also offer up our prayers and petitions; consequently what more appropriate in our modern church than an altar to the Lord.

The altar cloths he said represented the clothes in which our Saviour was wrapped when placed in the sepulchre. The lighted candles which we observed on each side were significant of the light of faith. The crucifix represented the sacrifice once made for our sins, and the incense such as had just been used was emblematical of the prayers which we offer up to God.

He now would ask, was there not a beautiful significancy in these things? Even many of those weak-minded persons, who, to gain a little popular applause, had the folly and affectation to deny that these were of any spiritual utility, were nevertheless secretly convinced that the emblematical had an inspiring religious effect. The venerable Catholic Church, for which he admitted he had a sincere respect, encouraged emblems and ceremonials—the poetry of the true faith—to satisfy the ideal in our nature. Restricted as we were at present to the use of these objects only to this private sanctuary, he had no doubt

but that the time would shortly come when we could use in our churches the *chalice*, which represents the holy sepulchre ; the *Paten*, as the great stone which was placed against its entrance ; and the holy water, holy oil, and holy candles, and even blessed relics, as aids to our faith. Most of these were now severally under a ban as being popish inventions and superstitions.

"Yes, my brethren," he continued, "it is very easy to be flippant on the subject of superstition, but he who is without a trace of superstition will also, very probably, be without a trace of religion—the one engenders the other. Man everywhere, in remote times as well as at present, in his barbarous as well as his civilized condition, impressed with his own weakness and impotence, is inclined to be a worshipper. In his barbarous state, yearning for the incomprehensible, he ascribes almost omnipotent power to the huge misshapen image which he has raised, and bows himself before it. He sees the form of some deity in the passing cloud, witnesses his glance in the lightning, and hears his voice in the storm. These imaginings are created by his instinctive feeling of superstition, without which he would be an atheist. In our present civilized and enlightened condition we have controlled and modified our superstitious inclinations, but to discard them altogether would be to discard religion itself. Therefore, I claim that superstition, which is natural to man, is the germ of religion, which is also natural, and akin to that which has been revealed—superstition being the active impelling power in both."

This, as nearly as I can now remember, was my uncle's reasoning on religion. On a future occasion he said he should try and explain the subject more fully. Before the service was ended, he wished to say to his hearers that, after much thought upon the subject, he had come to the conclusion that it was a "holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they

may be loosed from their sins." On their next meeting he should therefore ask the prayers of the congregation for the souls of such deceased persons as should be named to him by their friends desirous of pious supplication in their behalf.

The little boy in red swung his censer again. My uncle read a short prayer and pronounced a Latin benediction. The religious formality was over, and I had the benefit of my first "matins" at the oratory.





CHAPTER XXIX.

SOME SAD VICISSITUDES.

A COWARD is defined to be "a person who lacks courage to meet danger." This definition is generally supposed to mean danger mostly of a physical kind. The man who will follow in the train of a tyrant, and submit to oppression rather than resist, and who will suffer a wrong rather than risk a struggle for the right, is a coward. Many now will even say—no matter from whom the exhortation to the contrary—that he who will "resist not evil," or who, being struck on one cheek, will submissively turn the other to receive a blow, is also a coward.

In all ages, and among all people, the man with a craven heart has been most thoroughly despised ; for a genuine coward can be moulded into one of the basest of characters, and he can be used for any purpose, no matter how mean or how degrading. There is nothing lower, more contemptible, or more cowardly, than cowardice. There is yet, however, a more despicable kind of cowardice than that which arises from a dread of physical danger. A man may be so far without fear as to be reckless of life or limb, and yet be without true bravery ; he may be a hero in one respect, and a poltroon in another. It is only when he becomes a moral coward that he sinks every trace of true manhood into the polluting slough of mental slavery.

Moral cowardice is therefore the most shameful and most to be deplored, for its example is contaminating, and its corrupting influence almost unbounded. The moral coward is he who, while afraid to oppose false principles, or utter his own honest convictions in favor of what is good or true, becomes subservient, for his own elevation or aggrandizement, to popular opinion, which he knows to be wrong, and who is willing to bow down to illusions and prostrate himself before venerable myths, even while he sees Truth kept shivering in some cold, dark corner.

Thousands, who should otherwise remain unknown, attain the highest positions in society by such mean subserviency. Among rulers, legislators, teachers, preachers, and editors—especially among the latter,—cowards of this class can be found who represent the very meanest type of the pusillanimous. For personal reasons many of them denounce that which they know to be real, while they exalt that which they believe to be imaginary. It is truly pitiable to see some, who should be exponents of truth, lagging behind, afraid to take a single step in advance, lest they should come into collision with some popular absurdity. What a spectacle to see men, who are even half ashamed of their own cowardice, trying to assert a feigned independence, and making wild ostentatious flourishes in behalf of mental freedom while they are chained and fettered to a dogmatism from which they cannot, or dare not, move an inch! It is a humiliating sight to see intelligent men in such a position, but the most pitiful and humiliating of all is to be obliged to look at a public writer go into feigned ecstasies over the silly utterances and puerile platitudes of some feeble “successor” who can never get beyond orthodox nonsense; or to witness the genuflexions and prostrations and adorations of the Public Press of the land before some mammoth fraud which audaciously uprears its brazen head to assume pre-eminence.

This is the kind of cowardice or subserviency most to be deplored. Free thought must be circumscribed, and new ideas pronounced illegitimate. Every innovation dreaded by certain intellectual pigmies is arraigned as being in conflict with past experience. No new ventures must be made beyond certain old-time boundaries, and all progress would be brought almost to an end, were it not for the independent few—the really independent—who, indifferent to the scorn, the ridicule, the reproaches, and the misrepresentations which are so lavishly bestowed on them, still refuse to aid in the dethronement of Truth, or assist in the apotheosis of Error, or to join in the throng of its unreasoning, infatuated worshippers.

What cowards chill penury makes of some! If any plea can be offered for those who almost hate themselves for the sorry part which they are obliged to take in giving a seeming assent to false principles, or by yielding a seeming belief in old wives' fables, it may be the plea of their dire poverty.—Alas, that such should exist! But it does exist. Are not the poverty-stricken to be seen on every side—men, women and children—who have scarcely a place to lay their heads, and are often obliged, from day to day, to solicit, in the humblest manner, every mouthful they may get to eat. Who can expect manhood, or independence, or even honesty from a race of starvelings, the continuation of whose wretched existence may be dependent on the uncertain charity of those who claim their submission. There may be, and ought to be, pity for a class of persons so situated, many of whom might be willing to worship Jupiter or Juggernaut for a single meal. There may even be a plea offered for their apparent conformity to principles or doctrines which they neither care for nor understand, but what excuse can be made for those in affluence, for those beyond the reach of want, or for the well-to-do writers,* or teachers, or preachers, who will persistently

prostitute reason in defence of error, who refuse to investigate, and who would, in subservience to the powerful and influential, domineer over and even persecute thoughtful men and women who dare to judge for themselves.

If there can be joy among angels in heaven, or increased felicity among the guileless on earth, or among the pure in heart anywhere else, it must be when some sturdy, honest thinker, spurning dictation, and bursting through every barrier, leaves the beaten track of conformity and takes up his cross prepared to hear himself reproached and calumniated; and while mocked and despised on every side, to go on, and on, and forever on in a sincere and determined search after truth.

Poverty will furnish believers for any creed; and it has done so. The Churches court the wealthy, yet find it useful to patronize the poor, and all that can be gathered after missions are supplied, and all that can be spared after other religious expenses are met—including those for costly decorations and magnificent organs—is sometimes kept for the poor, and most of the poor eager to be patronized—for without such patronage they might die—soon find out where largess is most bountiful, and there they are willing to pray and to praise.

Now I soon discovered that the greater number of the persons who regularly attended service at the oratory were my uncle's poor—a select few—who were fed outside, or rather within the railed space or yard near the little chapel, every morning. I call them my uncle's poor in contradistinction to the numerous wandering destitute that could not as yet be relieved at St. Philip's. They had first to wait, if any came before the regular hour, until we had our breakfast, and then they were fed—almost after the manner that I often fed chickens at home—they got the crumbs that were left, or all we had to spare, or all that had been sent or collected for their relief. They sim-

ply got all there was to be had, little or much, and if it was not enough after being apportioned, why they would have to do with it until next day, unless successful in their appeals at other quarters. What we had to offer them might be sufficient for their first meal, or their only meal for the day. They got the portion after matins, and as a rule it was given only to those who were regular attendants at the oratory, who had worshipped in that place, and had therein asked their Father in heaven for their daily bread. If they did not pray for this from the heart, their prayers for any other mercy would be but the merest lip service.

Perhaps some one among the half-famished worshippers might have imagined that the slice or two of bread which afterwards came was the answer to the prayer of faith. Ah, me! I often used to look at these hungry ones devouring, yes ravenously devouring, the little we gave them, and often when we had no more to give, and when we knew that their hunger could scarcely have been appeased, in my pity for them I sometimes used to pray mentally for more—"O, Lord God, send these, the creatures thou hast made, oh, send them speedy help, send them food ere they perish!" Oh, how fervent used to be my appeal! But more never came, and my simple prayer on such occasions, let me endeavor to strengthen it with all the faith in my power, even by asking the Virgin to intercede, must still have been lacking in some great essential, for it was never once answered, that I can remember. Yet when our store of bread grew less, and when the mouths of the hungry were not filled, and when the rich withheld their hand, my impulse was to importune the Deity again, "O, Lord God, will thou not pity the poor."

Well I was asked out after breakfast to help to distribute the eatables collected for the waiting ones outside. Often as

I had seen poverty wandering about in rags and tatters I had never seen such a sight as this. There were no rags or tatters permitted to be worn among the select few belonging to my uncle. But oh, the trembling ones! for the morning was cold, who had tried to make the best of their faded bonnets and their thin shawls, and their threadbare dresses, who had by stitching, and patching and darning, done all in their humble power to come as near as possible in appearance to the respectable poverty which was under the respectable patronage of the vicar of St. Mary's church, and the high priest of the oratory of St. Philip's.

Poor things, there they sat, in the raw morning air, on two long benches, humbly waiting for the little we had to give. John, my uncle's man, went first, carrying a fair-sized basket of coarse brown bread cut in slices, and a kettle of what was called hot coffee. I followed with a smaller basket of something, and a little tin pail of what was called milk. It was arranged that I should take Mr. Callaghan's place from this morning in assisting to serve our registered dependants in waiting, and he was rather pleased to be released from this duty, and to get rid of any further attendance as one of the distributors of this daily charity. He came with us, however, this morning, he hoped for the last time, not that he was by any means indifferent to the claims of the poor, but really I think it was because he, like myself, felt pained in witnessing their great destitution. He came this time as if to introduce me as his successor, to some of those humble regular dependants whom he had known and relieved for some months, and of whom he had already given me a glimpse of the history of some of their lives, briefly illustrating by their woful downfall the strange but sad fluctuations of fortune.

How I pitied them! I never saw a beggar in the street whom I did not pity, but there was something in the look of

these people that claimed peculiar commiseration. The greater number of them had once been in respectable circumstances, and they seemed to prefer the retirement of my uncle's place instead of having perhaps to wait outside some rich man's door. One or two had been well-to-do traders, one had been wealthy, one was high-born, and some had once been distinguished; but, alas, all, all had been signally unfortunate! There they sat, how subdued at last, the once reckless ones now thoughtful, the wild ones tamed, the haughty ones humbled, and the once eminent abased. Poverty, like death, had brought them at last to a common level. There was no more pretention, no more self-reliance, no more exclusiveness, scarcely any more hope. Nothing on either side but gloom, nothing in the heavens above them but gloom, and hardly anything more in their hearts than the most terrible despondency. If any one among them, on the verge of despair, ventured one more appeal, and had mentally cried in the words of the afflicted Job, "I cry unto thee and thou dost not hear me; I stand up and thou regardest me not—Thou liftest me up to the wind; Thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance; for I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." And then if urged on, to cry aloud, "O God is there no further hope?" the response of the sinking, despairing heart would be "None." Every one of these destitute seemed to have made a last effort to rise again, a last attempt to retrieve, but all having again failed, they might now be likened to drifting wrecks left to the sport of the wind and the waves.

The first person we waited on was an old widow woman, poorly clothed as the others, who was called "Mrs. Evans." This was but an assumed name. She had once been Lady——, once an actual lady, a beauty and a leader of fashion in London who had had many admirers. She had married an old lord for wealth and

position, had been unfaithful, had been divorced and degraded, had become the slave of another, had been deserted by successive protectors, until finally she had been abandoned by all and destitute by many, and left to the mercy or the pity of the world. After many sorrows here she was at last, poor, pale-faced, sick and trembling with the cold. She thankfully accepted a tin full of coffee. As I poured a little milk into it she looked at me with a sad expression. When she had drunk this she put her two small slices of bread and a boiled egg into a little black bag which was hung on her arm, and then bowing to us respectfully she arose, and with feeble steps went silently away.

Another woman, thin and wan, and worn looking as any present, had once been an actress—a famous actress in her day—and so beautiful that any professional demerit was overlooked by judges, or applauded as even an artistic excellence. She had been the “rage” in her time. Theatres had nightly been crowded, and on more than one occasion she had been patronized even by the Royal presence. But at last a rival came and her fame was soon eclipsed. A more beautiful dramatic divinity had become the popular idol, and in trying to traduce and undermine this competitor she had sought aids which had eventually blasted her fame and disgraced herself. She was soon forgotten. Misfortune came in a hundred fearful shapes, and down the steep she fell with accelerated speed until she now found herself among the destitute outside the oratory.

With eager hands she raised the tin of coffee to her faded lips—lips that, no doubt, had often been moistened with the most luscious wines—and swallowed it as if she feared she would never have another draught. She appeared dissatisfied with what she had had, and would, I think, have pleaded for more if she thought pleading would have been of any service, but she had drunk her allowance, and as we passed on to the next I saw

her break off little pieces from one of her slices of bread, and place them inside her sunken cheek. Alas, what a fall from celebrity!

We passed in the same way two other poor old women. One had been a great singer, whose voice had charmed thousands. Now how broken, and unmusical, and asthmatic, was the voice of her old age as she crooned for a little more bread. Another, who was sadly drooped and wrinkled, had been, long years before I was born, a woman of rare personal attractions. She had been the favorite of a celebrated author, and had had verses and sweet sonnets, and tender madrigals dedicated to her as the "Fair Celia," many of which can still be found among select poems, and in gift books on our centre tables, and still addressed to other Celias as conveying the gushing emotions of love, or the gentle feelings of affection. Ah, me! Where now the "raven tresses," and "starry eyes," and blushing cheeks, that won such admiration? If this poor, faded, withered Celia could find heart to glance through her spectacles at one of these poems again what a heartless mockery the words would seem.

When the women and the few children they had with them were served, we next went to the men, who generally sat on a bench by themselves. There were, however, but few of these persons. For my present purpose I shall only select one of these, whose career was said to have been the most singular and unfortunate. He was a very old, gray-headed man. He wore an old broad-brimmed hat, from beneath which his white hair hung down at the sides, and was long enough to fall back as far as his shoulders. His hands were crossed on the top of his staff, his forehead rested on these, and he appeared to be looking down pensively at his mother earth, as if to join her in some solemn deliberation as to his future. He did not lift his

head when we approached him, and we waited silently. He raised it—what a face! Wrinkled, and care-worn, and anxious, like most of the faces of the poor, yet here was one that was still intellectual, with a trace of comeliness that had not all faded quite away. He looked up at us with some of the commanding appearance that had won him such respect in days and years long past, but in a moment or two the haughty stare passed off, and quick as he saw our baskets he seemed to understand the object of our presence, and to recognise his own humiliated condition, and then he bent his head again; and though I had seen his hands tremble before we had come up to him, I now imagined that this trembling was greater, and that it was caused by something that affected him more than old age, or palsy, or the cold. What could have been his reflections?

Mr. Callaghan spoke a few words and addressed him as "Colonel," yet the old man did not seem to take it as mockery, or perhaps he could not hear distinctly; for I saw him place his hand behind his ear when addressed. But the title was not given him in derisive courtesy; it was one to which by ordinary usage he was fairly entitled. This very person, aged and tottering as he now looked, had once been a stalwart colonel in a regiment of horse; an actual colonel in one of His Majesty's regiments of Dragoon Guards; an officer who had worn medals for bravery in battle, who had sat at dinner with princes, and nobles, and fine ladies, and whose name had been among the foremost members of a very exclusive London club. In the hey-day of life he seemed to forget that he should ever grow old; present affluence had led him to fancy that he could never become poor, and how could one so distinguished, and so great a favorite with some of the most influential in the land ever be passed unrecognised by old friends and sent to Coventry by old comrades? But it was so. In his wild career he

followed the example of many of his titled friends and lived a life of dissipation and extravagance. He had kept horses and hounds; had attended race courses and steeple chases; had bet heavily at the turf; had won large sums, and had lost still heavier amounts, until his resources had become almost exhausted. While pressed by creditors, and shunning importunate duns, he had betaken himself to fashionable gambling, and, after repeated losses, had risked his honor on a game, and been detected as a cheat using false cards. His expulsion from his club immediately followed. He was cashiered and disgraced, and, leaving the country, he sought foreign companionship, had to mingle with the disreputable, and quickly lost every shilling he possessed. Soon reduced to greater extremities, he fell still lower in the social scale, until, step by step, he brought himself to his present wretched condition.

He took his allowance like the others. He drank his tin of coffee, and commenced to eat his bread and his boiled egg. If he had no desire to live as a wandering pauper, he evidently did not care to end his few remaining years or days by lingering starvation, and he ate. As he did so, I pitied him too—so old and wearied looking; yet still with something of the soldier in appearance. He wore his old patched suit differently from the manner of others, his old boots a little blackened, trousers strapped or tied down, hollow breast padded out, and neck stiffened and held up by some contrivance. He would, no doubt, have worn his medals, but those, I heard, had long ago been pawned or sold for actual necessities—thus appeared the “Colonel.” Poor, old, crushed and defeated cavalier, so reduced at last to the very lowest rank of human life!

I often think that the aged unfortunate should receive more lenient consideration than they usually get. The sorrows, and disappointments, and misfortunes of years have their own silent

influence for good even on the most reckless or depraved. Who could remain obstinate, or unrelenting, or remorseless, after having found his opportunities lost, his chances thrown away, his friends alienated, and his own reputation blasted? Unless the heart has become desperately hardened, old age and reflection must produce sincere regret for past misdeeds.

I shall not mention others who had like the "Colonel" fallen from some high estate. Each case might seem to be, with but slight changes, almost a repetition of the last. After we had served the older people we came to the boys. There were only three or four of these. The first took their allowance very thankfully, but the last boy turned away his head as we came near, and looked sulky and discontented.

"What's up now, Jim?" inquired John, my uncle's man, seeing that the lad did not reach for what was offered him.

"I don't care for nothink, so I don't," sniffled Jim, while he swayed his legs now forwards, and now sideways on the bench. He was what was called "seedy looking," with close cropped hair. A little torn cap was tied under his chin to keep it on his head; his shoulders were drawn up, and the collar of his old short jacket was turned high enough to reach his ears, which he seemed anxious to bury out of sight as well as out of the cold.

"What's the matter, Jim?" said Mr. O'Callaghan, in rather a kindly way. The boy made no reply, but swung his legs about more actively than before.

"Nuff's the matter. I ain't agoin' to starve on bits o' wittles like that, when I can get more sumerelse." He did not yet touch the two little cuts of bread, but cast an occasional side look at them as if to reproach them for their want of size and solidity.

"Well, if you don't want them," said John, "what brings you here?"

"I ain't a comin' here any more—see if I do—I ain't. This is not a goin' to be the ony rattry round here, I tell you. There's parson Monk a fixin' up another rattry. He's got as far as dips and smoke aready." (He meant candles and incense.) "He's a fixed up a halter as 'igh as my 'ed."—He raised his hand to show how high the new altar would be—"an' he's a goin' to have a big scrucifix, I tell you, an' lots o' little ones all about, just wait. He'll have them sure, and he'll soon git as far as westments wid spangles just as big as a fardin piece, see if he won't."

"And you want to desert us, you little rascal," said Mr. Callaghan, humorously, "and are going to that 'rattry,' as you call it, instead of to ours?"

"Yes I be," said Jim, still sulky, "yes I bē, for I brought lots on 'em here, an' if I can't get a hegg the same as the rest, I'm a goin' to parson Monk's, for he's put 'em down for heggs all around an' lots o' sprats o' Fridays."

The cause of Jim's trouble was that he did not get an egg. One egg each had been given to the old people, but the boys got only bread and coffee, and Jim, having, as he considered, patronized my uncle's oratory by inducing some poor people to attend matins, he felt that he was entitled to an egg at least for his influence with some of them.

It will be seen from this incident why it was that Jim, as well as others, had attended so regularly at St. Philip's; and now as *ritualism* was extending, and another oratory about being established, Jim had determined to make the most of his poverty, and take it as his chief commodity to the best market. As there were no more eggs, Mr. Callaghan, desirous, perhaps, to retain Jim's influence for my uncle, or, more likely, through a feeling of pity, gave him a penny, and whispered something in his ear which immediately set him all right, and he was

lavish in promises of what he was going to do for the "ratty" of St. Philip's. "See if I don't."

During the time we were engaged with this boy, the two benches became vacated. One after another of our poor dependants had slipped quietly away, most of them to wander listlessly through the streets for another day, some to claim further charity, and when the shades of evening came, to retire, wearied, and sad, and often hungry, to some uncomfortable den, or more likely to some wretched place, to try and find rest during another cold night.





CHAPTER XXX.

TIRED OF LIFE.

“IF this won’t do him, faith I don’t know what will. Now, just look at that, *ma bouchal*,” said Mr. Callaghan as he handed me a new kind of clerical *stole* or scarf for my examination. He and I were in the oratory together one quiet evening, and he was looking over some clerical “toggerly,” as he called it, belonging to my uncle. There was an aperture under the altar; a kind of safe, in which was kept a good sized trunk containing my uncle’s canonicals, including cassocks, gowns, surplices, albs, stoles, maniples, and chasubles; the last three were vestments but lately added—“the tawdry fantastic accessories of ritualism,” as certain low-church people named them—but they were considered by my uncle necessary to be worn by “advanced” clergymen while officiating according to the “improved” mode of worship now upheld by him and a few others still belonging to the Established Church. There were several of these additional vestments such as stoles, maniples and chasubles, and they were of different colors, white, black, red, purple or violet, and green. Most of them had been presented to my uncle by certain wealthy ladies who approved of the stand he had taken—though as yet rather privately—towards a return to the practice of the rites and ceremonies of the primitive Church.

He certainly felt proud of the showy articles, and placed them in the exclusive charge of Mr. Callaghan, to whose taste and judgment was left the selection of such of these as should be worn during Divine service on certain days in the oratory. There were other things belonging to the altar placed also in this receptacle for preservation, such as the communion plate, the censer, extra candlesticks and extra crosses, banners and pictures, little statues and ornaments—most of which would be required in special religious services, or on great festivals, and which Mr. Callaghan rather irreverently denominated, “blessing tools, gimcracks, and fal-de-dals.”

“See there now” said he, still looking at the new *stole*, and affecting his broadest brogue, “jist look. Be the powers they’ll be no standin’ him whin he rigs himself out in that—Blur alive wont he be the gayest of the gay intirely—jist look. An’ see here,” he held up a new chasuble which had been made up by some pious lady and sent to my uncle the previous day. It was of a brilliant scarlet color, bound round the edges with gold lace, and a long cross formed with spangles had been worked on the back. “Be the mortal isn’t that stunnin’? Who wouldn’t be proud to shoulder such a cross as that? Won’t that be somethin’ for them flatheaded low-churchmen to talk about. “Now let me see,” said he, searching the trunk, “havn’t we somethin’ to suit that?” In a minute he pulled out a stole and a maniple of the same color, and holding out one in each hand at arm’s length he seemed to gaze on them with delight—“Arrah, blur an’ ages, wont the ould lad be bloomin’ when he gits spancellor in these? Och! divil a finer in the whole kingdom! Sure the Pope himself couldn’t swell out more nate or daycent. Well, well, what a blessed thing it is to be holy, an pious, an godly, an religious—that’s the tau-tol-logy, or the whole list I b’leeve—an’ to be a priest, or parson, or preacher, or minister, wid duds

like these covered a'most all over wid goold-lace an' spangles, an' ribbins. Be dad, but its enough to drive me crazy. Shure I ought to have been a priest myself—so I ought—aye, a bishop by this time—divil a finer life for iny man, lots o' the best av ivry thing an' nothin' to do but display yourself up there (pointing to the altar) once in a while, or to stow yourself in there (pointing to the little confessional) for an hour or two once or twice a week to hear the *mea culpas* of half-a-dozen or so of thim faymale craw-thumpers, an' thin to vary the intertainmint by lordin' it over a pack uv bewildered *omadhawns*; an' thin to be cock-shure uv heaven in the long run. Och! be the mortal, 'tis jist the way with me, I'm always behind, or too late—just on the ground the day after the fair. Well *mabochlish*, here we are an' we've only got to make the best of it."

"Arrah! look at that," said he again, taking up the new chasuble. "Won't the ould boy step out like a drum-major whin he puts that on him—be the powers won't he? Why you *gommoch*, you stare at it as if you niver saw inything like it before."

I assured him that I had never seen a vestment of that kind of the same color, for that it seemed to me to be as red as a soldier's coat.

"So it is," said he, "an' that's the right color for it. Isn't ivry man a sojer that fights the divil—that faces the very ould fellow himself? But," said he, resuming his natural manner of speaking, "I'll tell you something about the different colors and when they should be used. In imitation of the Roman Church we have here almost every hue of the rainbow—white, black, red, violet, and green. White vestments are worn at service on feasts of the Lord, and on those of the Virgin; black on Good Friday, and when prayers, or masses if you like, are said for the dead; red, at Whitsuntide, and on feasts of the

apostles ; purple or violet on Sundays in Advent ; and green," said he, again assuming the brogue, "the rale ould blessed green av coorse fur St. Patrick's day in the mornin'"—and then he hopped off briskly and skipped around me once or twice while he whistled a few bars of the Irish national air, snapping his fingers, as he pranced, to keep time.

As he knew that my uncle had a weakness for ostentatious ceremonial and clerical display, he selected vestments for him to be worn next day at matins ; they were as showy as those I had seen him wear on my first attendance at the oratory, but Mr. Callaghan said they were of the color suitable for the feast of some saint that he mentioned, and my uncle would have worn those of any kind, or a suit of motley had they been recommended by his most esteemed deputy.

During the first few weeks at my uncle's I used to be often surprised and often amused at Mr. Callaghan's humorous levity. At matins, and sometimes at church, he would, once in a while, put himself in some ridiculous attitude when it was least expected, or suddenly affect such a sanctimonious look, that I frequently found it difficult to keep from laughing ; and the flippant irreverent manner in which he often spoke of subjects and things that I had been taught at home to consider sacred, made me once suspect that he had no very profound respect for our services at daily matins or even at St. Mary's ; but now having got accustomed to his frequent curious remarks, which were often as skeptical in their way as anything I had ever heard from Shawn, I began to doubt whether he had a belief in religion of any kind.

As to my uncle himself I had the most satisfactory evidence that as a clergyman or religious teacher he was actuated more by formality and mere show than by any strong religious convictions. That his religion, in fact and in truth, consisted more

in being the member of a certain Church and a strict adherent to the practice of certain rites and ceremonies, than in the feeling of any need for greater purity of heart than that which he had simply inherited from nature ; that his impressions regarding what is generally accepted as true piety were of the most superficial character ; that to be a churchman was all that was necessary to be a Christian, no matter how vague his ideas or even his belief might be as to doctrines ; and that, evidently fully satisfied with ordinary moral maxims, he never perplexed himself by trying to fathom the depths of religious mysticism, or to trouble himself by an investigation into the claims of what he had accepted as religious truth ; that, tied down as he was to observances, he seemed to think that while doing his duty in this respect—the inculcation of ecclesiastical pageantry—he was truly and faithfully fulfilling the whole law.

Having observed these things, and having from time to time witnessed the hatred and contention existing among the numerous Christian sects, young as I was, I began to feel indifferent towards religion itself, a growing repugnance to its teachings, and the strongest disinclination to appear in a red gown and skull-cap as a second “cardinal,” to swing a censer, and make responses to prayers, and litanies, and vain repetitions, and to bend and bow in a certain manner during what seemed to me to be the puerile unmeaning formalities of the oratory, while Mr. Callaghan was looking on or watching me with an affectation of pious gravity, or of lofty supervision.

I may say here that in St. Mary's Church where my uncle officiated every Sunday, the ordinary episcopal service was used, but I often thought that he took but little interest in its rubrical forms, that he did not feel, in a way, so much at home in the large church, in plain gown and bands, while reading gospels and collects, as he did on the altar of the oratory in

shining vestments, while bending, and bowing, and turning, using genuflexions, and offering invocations to saints and to the virgin. There was a wide difference between the form of worship and even in the objects of worship in both places ; and as great a difference between his religious ceremonial of week days and of Sundays.

His ministerial duties on the Sabbath were generally performed in the most perfunctory manner, and he read short peculiar sermons—which, by the bye, had been purchased for him—as if desirous of exhibiting the weakness of low church, or so-called evangelical principles ; and anything he added himself to the written remarks would be in the form of a mild protest against the puritanism or fanaticism which could lead any to object to a few ancient but most decent and appropriate ceremonies which helped to make the worship of God more attractive and impressive ; or to ornamentation which made the house of the Lord look more like a temple dedicated to Him : and his further arguments in this direction might be conveyed as follows :—Minds were differently constituted. Rites and ceremonies would reach some with whom mere words would perhaps be ineffectual ; and pious pictures, and even devotional attitudes, would be more touchingly eloquent to many than the most elaborate reasoning. Men should, therefore, be sought after by different methods, and any method which long experience had proved useful should not be overlooked or thoughtlessly pronounced extravagant or superstitious.

The great temple of nature has a thousand attractions and ornamentations. Were Nature herself only to be found sitting in loneliness upon some vast arid plain, like some solitary pyramid upon a wide desert, men might say that she had neither form nor comeliness. But look around, see her enthroned upon the mountain under her canopy of clouds, see her pausing on

the sunlit hill, or reclining in the shaded vale; see her wandering through green fields or along shining rivers, listening in the deep woods to the murmur of the running stream, or standing on the naked rock to hear the ripple of the little brook. How desolate the world would be without these and various other captivations furnished by the great High Priest for the embellishment of his own stupendous temple; and should not the humbler edifice, made with hands, into which the creature is called to worship the Creator, should it not be, as far as possible, an epitome of the more glorious structure raised by the simple fiat of the Almighty?

Men's feelings of regard are excited in different ways. One person might value a bird for the gorgeousness of its plumage, another for the sweetness of its song. A rose may be a delight to some more on account of its beauty than its fragrance. Thus we see that as human beings can be drawn towards an object by entertaining different ideas of its nature or of its value, so, also they may be led to approach the sanctuary by different avenues, and led to a reverence for the Supreme by dwelling on the beauty of His presence, as much as on the immensity of His power or the extent of His goodness.

Much as my uncle might feel inclined to test his theories by practical experiment, he had as yet made but the most cautious ventures towards ritualism in St. Mary's. Though a few might be found among the members of that church who could see no real harm among symbols or ceremonies, and who would even tolerate a little ecclesiastical parade, still there were others—rather strong Protestants—in his congregation who would resist at once any very open approaches towards popery, or such as it was said had been made at the oratory. •But as this little chapel was on his own ground, and, in a manner, private, it was left out of the power of any one to enter a complaint as to

his religious practices therein. Suspicions as to his teaching in that place had, however, already been engendered, requiring any step which he took "in advance" at St. Mary's to be taken with the greatest precaution.

So far, all that an ordinary observer could discover in the church was a plain embroidered cross on the cover of the communion table, two silver candlesticks, apparently more for ornament than for use, placed on the same representation of an altar; the communion cup in the centre, and a picture of the twelve apostles against the wall behind these. During service my uncle would deviate in some slight degree from the prescribed forms; he would spread out his arms while muttering some prayer, he would bend, and bow, and turn, oftener than was necessary, and he would make little attempts at dumb show sufficient to produce only a smile. Had some of the congregation seen but half of what we had just taken out of his trunk, or even a few of the other "consecrated" articles which were stowed away under the altar in the oratory, they would want no plainer evidence of the tendency of their chosen minister towards Rome.

After Mr. Callaghan had exhibited all my uncle's clerical finery, and had made such eloquent comments thereon as he had deemed necessary, he seemed to think that there might be something else hidden away under the little altar which might be worth seeing and explaining. With the oddest look imaginable, he peeped in, his hand and arm soon followed, and in a few moments he pulled out a black quart bottle full of some kind of liquor.

"Arrah what's that?" said he, affecting the greatest surprise at the discovery. "Be the mortal who'd think of finding the like o' this here? Sure miracles will niver sase, so they won't." Then looking at me, as if for my approval, he asked, after a

little pause, "Now I wonder av it id be iny harm to try an find out what's in this," and he held out the bottle between him and the light, while he looked through it keeping one eye closed, his face being twisted into the most curious expression.

"Maybe it's ony water after all, they have it so well corked up," said he, giving me an interrogatory glance, and then looking through the bottle again.

"But faith it's an odd looking color for water, so it is, an' accordin' to my limited comprehension there's some deep saycrit about this that's worth findin' out—What d'ye say?" He asked me this as if everything depended on my consent.

"You don't know,—Is that all you can reply? Well av you don't know it's time you should, and as it's my business to impart ideas an to extind yer knowledge av matters an things, I don't think yer edication would be inything like complate av I didn't explain somethin' to you as to the solid or liquid contints av tñis irregular cylindrical tube."

He pretended to make another search in the place under the altar, and to his surprise again he chanced to find a corkscrew.

"Blur an ages," said he, "what's the manein av all this?—bottles an corkscrews an the like in sich a place as that. Well, as I'm a livin' sowl, I b'lieve that identical spot is bewitched. It's a riddle, or mystery, or puzzle av some some kind or other, an as I've partly got over a belief in mysteries, either sacred or profane, I propose to excercise me rayson an common sinse an find out what this is so as not to be botherin' me brains about it iny longer—so here goes."

In less than a minute he had the cork out and his nose over the neck of the bottle. "I'm clane bate at last," said he, pretending not to be able to guess what was the contents. He handed the bottle to me. I told him I thought it smelt like wine.

"Oh nonsinse," said he. "What id they be doin' wid wine here—but jist let me try. Faith," said he, taking the bottle from his mouth, "it tastes mighty like somethin'—I don't know what—maybe you're a better judge. Jist take a pull at that," said he, handing me the bottle, "an let me know what you think."

To satisfy him I just tasted the wine.

"I won't take it," continued he, almost scornfully refusing the bottle, "sure that little nibble wouldn't drown a fly. Take a good twist av it, man, an let me know what it's like." I said that it was undoubtedly wine.

"Thin as sure as I'm a livin' man," said he, "they've been performin' the ould miracle here over agin, that's jist what they've been doin', turnin' water clane into wine, an wine av the right kind, I tell you. 'Pon me sowl an 'twould have taken even holy water itself to make it as good as that. Oh don't be lookin' so surprised me nate young man; that's the very thing they've been at. Sure such a fine ould Christian gintleman as yer uncle, that b'lieves ivry thing in religion, wouldn't be sich a haythin as to have the laste doubt that by puttin' a bottle ur two av water, av rale holy water,—he could sind an git a dozen bottles av it at the Catholic factory over there across the way—by stickin', I say, half a dozen or so of thim well corked an sealed in there, an thin by puttin' his best foot foremost, or his stoutest faith to the tist, they'd find the rale jaynuine thing—the most beautiful stuff imaginable—in place av the cold water. Jaynuine it is, av I'm iny judge," said he, after having held the bottle up to his mouth again long enough to reduce the contents by fully a third.

"Arrah, try it," urged he again, seeing that I hesitated to taste the contents of the bottle another time. "What are you afear'd of. Take a good swig. Av it's good for the sowl shure

it must be good for the body; it doesn't need much logic to prove that, fur you know 'tis for the sake uv their sowl's that they have it here, I suppose. Well, iv that's medicine fur a sick sowl, faith, I might want to be sick all the time."

I think Mr. Callaghan must have known that what he had just taken was some of the fine communion wine selected for the oratory; for he had charge of everything in the closet under the altar, of which he kept the key; but still he asserted that a miracle had been performed.

"You doubt it, I persave," said he, giving me one of his curious looks. "Well, maybe you do; but av you b'lieve the great book—an' I s'pose it's a shame fur me that I'm once in a while a little skeptical about some things in it myself—shure you have authority, if plain words mane anything, to b'lieve that miracles will nivir sase, nivir. Doesn't the same ould book say, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, b'lieve that ye receive them and ye shall have them.' Faith, that's as plain a promise as I want, there's no going about the bush there. A born fool couldn't mistake the mainin uv that; an' now, be the mortal, av you b'lieve that—as yer bound like an honest Christian to do—why not b'lieve that they kin still turn water into wine? Yis, a miracle it is, the taste uv the contents uv that (he held out the bottle) is enough to prove it. That's none of yer common stuff, me boy, take me word for that."

"Have faith, I mane jist enough uv it, an' the thing is done. That's where ould Montjoy failed whin he had the assurance to put his dribble uv that article to the test. Shure he thought he had faith enough to surpass Peter in the attempt to walk upon water, an' *in* he went and shure enough *down* he wint, makin' an omadhawn uv himself before them all." *

* Many years ago, a pious gentleman named Montjoy put his faith to an actual test by making an attempt to walk upon water.

By this time Mr. Callaghan had introduced the bottle to his mouth so often that there was scarcely a drop of wine left. His fondness for such drink was his principal failing; and I have reason to believe that it was not the first bottle of that liquor which he had managed to discover under the altar. He had now become wonderfully communicative, and he told me many things about his private affairs and his family matters, and of how he had once been, as he called it, "head over heels in love;" and then he made some strange comments on religious subjects, which if repeated in the presence of my mother, or my aunt, or of my father, would have startled them into fear for the safety of my orthodox principles.

"Jist look at 'em," said he, pointing to the vestments he had laid out for the next day, "what miserable frippery to becloud a man's mind. Yer uncle is a good-natured ould man, but there lies his religion, an' av he hadn't thim to show himself off in, he'd as lief be a Turk, or a Quaker, or anything else. Jist let me see how I'd look in that."

Before I well knew what he was going to do, he had the chasuble drawn over his head and, with his arms akimbo, was pacing about with a kind of military step. I could not keep from laughing at his ridiculous appearance, nor at the half jocular, half sanctimonious expression of his face.

"Och, be the piper," said he, as he marched about, "av I was only a rale priest, wouldn't I lether the daylight's out uv some uv them bastard Riverinds, an' even show yer uncle something he doesn't know."

Just then the door opened—we had neglected to secure it inside—and in walked my uncle himself. Mr. Callaghan, so heroic a moment before, now seemed to recognise his ridiculous position, felt rather ashamed of his appearance, and made some excuse by saying that he had put on the vestment in order to

ask me how it looked. Fortunately it was getting rather dusky, and my uncle did not seem to notice that there was anything irreverent in our behavior. He was evidently a little excited.

"Mr. O'Callaghan," said he, "here is a note I have just received requesting our attendance at the bedside of our poor old friend, the Colonel. He shot himself about an hour ago. He is, I believe, still living, and if we hurry we may be in time to administer some of the rites of the Church before he breathes his last."

What a shock to us all! Mr. Callaghan, who had been more intimate with the Colonel than with any of the others whom he had so often fed on the benches, appeared to be almost restored to perfect sobriety, and to grow serious. We left the oratory in a far different mood from that in which we had so lately indulged. And when I was left alone, I fancied my uncle and Mr. Callaghan by the dying man's side in some wretched place of refuge, repeating some formal prayer and going through some priestly ceremony. Of what possible benefit could these be now? I thought of the Colonel's lost opportunities, and of the agitation of mind that must have led him to beckon death near rather than die of lingering starvation. Poor old Colonel! What a long downward march his life was! And now I fancied I could see him stretched upon a pauper's bed, soon to be hurried into a pauper's grave, over which no tear would be shed, or farewell shot ever fired.





CHAPTER XXXI.

CAUGHT AT LAST.

I USED to hear from home regularly, for my dear mother was always punctual in sending me letters. When I was only about six months in Bristol, I had a letter informing me that, after repeated altercations, another religious dispute had taken place between my father and Mr. Casey, and that it was of such an angry character that a dissolution of their business partnership followed.

For many reasons I was very sorry to hear this. It was hard to think that a union which had been so long, and of such mutual advantage, should have been almost suddenly dissolved on account of some heated discussion respecting their creeds. I knew Mr. Casey to be a most excellent man, one of the kindest that ever lived, and I felt confident that my father would have reason, particularly in a business point of view, to regret their separation. Though my mother, as well as Shawn, often used to say that something of the kind would happen sooner or later, yet when the news of this severance came, it took me by surprise and set me thinking of what its effects might be in many ways concerning my mother and myself.

My brother, after having spent a few months at a nautical academy, had just been sent off on his first sea voyage, and I was informed that upon his return my father intended to keep

him at home and put him in the office in order to give him a knowledge of the business in which the late firm of Fairband and Casey had been so long engaged.

My sister and Jane, I was happy to learn, had been sent to the same convent-school. Whenever I had a letter from Ellen I should therefore most likely have a chance of hearing something of Jane, from whom I had not yet received a communication. I believed that she would feel as sorry for the dissolution of partnership which had taken place as I possibly could be myself.

Everything at home went on about as usual. Shawn, poor man, often mentioned my name. The only other event of any importance during the first year, was the marriage of Nellie Carberry to a sailor. My mother informed me of this, and remarked in her letter how strange it was that my brother's prediction should have been so exactly fulfilled; and then I remembered how he had foretold Nelly's marriage when he examined the grounds in a tea cup one evening. After all I did not see anything very remarkable in this. We all knew that a young sailor used to call to see Nelly every time he returned to port, and that there was every probability of their marriage sooner or later.

Some time during the second year we had the great pleasure of a short visit from my mother. She was much failed and older looking. My uncle was almost as well pleased to see her as I was. She derived some benefit from her stay, and we were all much happier while she was with us. I accompanied her on her return and remained home in Ireland for about a week, but as Jane was away somewhere on a visit I had not the pleasure of meeting her.

The sixth year had almost passed without any occurrence of importance, when our ordinary quiet life at St. Philip's was

disturbed in a most unexpected manner. Things had gone on at the oratory in the usual way, except that my uncle had become more "pronounced," and that there was an increase in the formality of worship, some additional ceremonies, greater clerical display, and a greater number of regular members.

Within that limited time, one after another of our poor friends, those who had come to wait, or worship, or pray at early matins—I often wondered if they ever sincerely prayed, and for what—who had depended on us at least for their first meal, had passed away, not exactly as the old Colonel had made his exit, but, as every month went by, some familiar wan and withered face would be missed from the benches for ever, and some other poor creature would have taken his or her place ; so that we had always a sufficient number of those needy believers to attend at matins and afterwards to wait on the benches outside and accept of the charity which we had to bestow.

Well, it so happened one morning that we were to have an unusual display at the oratory. It was the feast of some distinguished saint, and as my uncle had grown bolder in his advocacy of ritualism, and less particular as to those who should be admitted, several strangers were present ; and the congregation—if it can be called such—was larger than usual. My uncle was robed in his most gorgeous canonicals ; and every extra candlestick, every extra cross, or crucifix, or picture, or ornament, had been placed upon the little altar.

Mr. Callaghan, somewhat stouter in form, had on his slovenly alb, and I—now nearly or quite his height—was vested in the crimson cassock and girdle which I so much disliked ; I had on a skull cap of the same color, and in this ridiculous looking costume I had to swing the censer and make response to a ceremony, as closely approaching the celebration of mass in a Catholic church as any ritualist could desire.

This day in particular the religious pageantry exceeded anything previously witnessed at the oratory. We had a greater repetition of Latin prayers, more than the usual bowing and genuflexions, and more moving about and turning from side to side. At one part of the ceremony my uncle lifted the communion cup above his head, after the manner of the elevation of the host by a Catholic priest, and, during this movement, a boy rang a little hand-bell and raised my uncle's vestment at the back, and two other boys, also in albs, held up lighted candles, while I plied the censer as fast as I was able, until the whole place was almost filled with the fragrant smoke.

After this particular service was concluded, my uncle read out the names of certain deceased persons for whom the prayers of the faithful were requested. He then gave an explanation of some of the ceremonies and advocated their use in all regular churches. He spoke of miracles and of relics, and lauded the faith that could still believe in these. Luke-warm Christians, as well as avowed infidels, were occasionally flippant in asserting that the true Church had no further power to prove its authority by miracles; or that there could be any possible virtue in the sacred relics of departed saints. But he could tell them that the day of miracles was not yet past, that the accumulation of evidence in proof of those taking place, even at the present time, was overwhelming; and that the most wonderful cures were being performed through the holy instrumentality of relics. He then told them that in support of his views, he would give them extracts from the work of a prominent clergyman, who had but lately joined the Catholic Church, and he read:—"I firmly believe that the relics of saints are doing innumerable miracles and graces daily, and that it needs only for a Catholic to show devotion to any saint in order to

receive special benefits from his intercession. I firmly believe that saints in their lifetime have before now raised the dead to life, crossed the sea without vessels, multiplied grain and bread, cured incurable diseases, and stopped the operation of the laws of the universe in a multitude of ways.* And again:—“Certainly the Catholic Church, from east to west, from north to south, is according to our conceptions hung with miracles. The store of relics is inexhaustible; they are multiplied through all lands, and each particle of each has in it at least a dormant—perhaps an energetic—virtue of supernatural operation. At Rome there is the true cross, the crib of Bethlehem, and the chair of St. Peter; portions of the crown of thorns are kept at Paris; the holy coat is shown at Trèves; the winding sheet at Turin. At Monza the iron crown is formed out of a nail of the cross, and another nail is claimed for the Duomo of Milan, and pieces of our Lady’s habit are to be seen in the Escorial. The Agnus Dei, blessed medals, the scapular, the cord of St. Francis, all are the medium of Divine manifestations of grace. Crucifixes have bowed the head to the suppliant, and Madonnas have bent their eye upon assembled crowds. St. Januarius’ blood liquefies periodically at Naples, and St. Winifred’s well is the scene of wonders even in an unbelieving country. Women are marked with sacred stigmata; blood has flowed on Fridays from their five wounds, and their heads are crowned with a circle of lacerations. Relics are forever touching the sick, the diseased, the wounded, sometimes with no result at all, at other times with marked and undeniable efficacy. Who has not heard of the abundant favors gained by the Blessed Virgin, and of the marvellous consequences which have attended the invocation of St. Anthony of Padua? These phenomena are sometimes reported of saints in their lifetime

* From Dr. Newman’s *Apologia*.

as well as after death, especially if they were evangelists or martyrs. The wild beasts crouched before their victims in the Roman amphitheatre; the axe-man was unable to sever St. Cecilia's head from her body, and St. Peter elicited a spring of water for his gaoler's baptism in the Mamertine. St. Francis Xavier turned salt water into fresh for five hundred travellers; St. Raymond was transported over the sea *on his cloak*; St. Andrew shone brightly in the dark; St. Scholastica gained by her prayers a pouring rain; St. Paul was fed by ravens, and St. Frances saw her guardian angel. I need not continue the catalogue. It is agreed on both sides; the two parties join issue over a fact; that fact is the claim of miracles on the part of the Catholic Church; it is the Protestant's charge and it is our glory."*

"There," said my uncle triumphantly when he had finished reading, "there is evidence that cannot be gainsaid. The Catholic Church is the parent of ours; it is the venerable mother to whom we shall ever belong; and now let him who dares to doubt take heed of the consequences."

He further approved of invocations to saints, and above all in humble appeals to the Virgin whose intercession could be counted on as being the most certain and effectual.

At the close of the altar service there was to be a procession as imposing as could be formed in such a limited place, and while some boys were making preparations for that purpose Mr. Callaghan whispered to me, "Well, aren't you satisfied now, you doubting pagan? Put a piece of the shin or jaw bone of a saint in yer pocket an' there ye are, me boy, able to dale wid the divil himself. Holy Moses, what an array uv authorities! All you have to do now is to b'lieve, an' ye can raise the dead, or cross the wide ocean straddled upon an ould jacket! Lord

deliver us, but ain't rale faith wonderful ! Didn't ye hear him tell about thim crosses, an' cribs, an' chairs, an' holy coats, an' windin' sheets, an' ould nails, an' cords, an' medals, an' scapulars, an' the way they could turn you inside out av you said boo to thim ; an thin comes St. Anthony of Padua—maybe that chap was a rale Paddy in disguise—an' the rist uv the holy fellows doin' things to amaze us intirely. Arrah now, in rale earnest, what d'ye think uv all that ?”

I must say that, much as I had heard before from the most credulous and illiterate Catholics, as to what banshees, witches, lepricawns, or fairies could do, or had done in old times, I never heard any thing, for grossness of superstitious conception to exceed the “marvellous consequences” said to have been witnessed in bowing crucifixes, blinking madonnas, the liquefaction of a saint's blood, the wonders of St. Winifred's well, women bearing mysterious marks corresponding to the wounds of the Saviour, blood flowing from these on Fridays, the axe-man unable to cut off a saint's head, and another saint transported over the wide sea on his cloak ! I felt shocked more particularly when I was informed that an educated Englishman, even in the blaze of the scientific light of the nineteenth century, could assert his belief in such old wives' fables, and mouth them throughout the land, unabashed, as being evidences not alone of the apostolic authority of a certain church, but as undoubted proofs of the truth of Christianity itself !

No wonder that there should be so many scoffers in these latter days ; no wonder that some should stand amazed, and rub their eyes, as if to try and discover whether religion had not made a mad-house of the wide world ; and, worse than all, no wonder that gross superstition should still prevail among the ignorant, while it is fostered by the licentious credulity of so-called learned men ; a credulity which clouds the intellect,

debauches the mind, and puts reason and common sense at utter defiance !

The procession started. I led the way a few feet in advance, swinging the censer. My uncle then came, clasping the communion cup with both hands, and holding it before him ; two boys at each side, carried lighted candles. Mr. Callaghan followed, bearing a large silver crucifix ; while half a dozen boys, including Jim—whom we still managed to keep with us—dressed in albs, came on with irregular steps in the rear, some carrying little bunches of flowers, and others little silken banners.

The seats had been arranged, so as to permit us to pass around the room, leaving the people to sit in the centre. As all could not be accommodated, there being a greater number of persons present than had been expected, ten or a dozen strangers had to stand at one side near the door. Most of these might have been in sympathy with our proceedings, but as I looked at them when passing, I thought I noticed a scowl on the faces of two or three, while an expression of pity or of contempt was observable on others.

I must say that I did not feel surprised at this, for, though taking a reluctant part in the religious mummary, I felt the full force of how ridiculous we must appear in the eyes of sensible persons not blinded by the absurdity of the garish display we were making, and what a travesty on simple devotional exercises it must seem to nearly all.

We had to pass three times around the place. We had just got close to the door on our last circuit, when my shoulder was touched somewhat roughly by one of the strangers standing close to me. I looked up, and, Oh horror ! there was my father, with the old look of anger and excitement on his face ; the frown and the expression which I had so often seen when he was denounc-

ing popery in presence of my mother ; and the same which we had witnessed, and which had made us all so uncomfortable, the last time I saw him and Mr. Casey together, at our own table. There in the oratory stood my father, with pressed lips, as if scanning my appearance, with the most disdainful recognition, and there at his very side was my aunt, gazing at me with the same bitterness of countenance with which I saw her once confront and accuse poor Mrs. Reardon. Had my officiating uncle noticed my sudden nervous attack, or known anything of my feelings, he would probably have said that I was saved from annihilation by a miracle then and there wrought in my favor. I really felt so ashamed, so mortified, and so convicted, that I could hardly move another step. I fancied that every eye in the place was fixed upon my confusion. A more terrible feeling no mortal man ever endured than I did for the few moments that I became so overwhelmed, and which moments, seemed to me more like long, long hours.

How I got away from that terrible spot I know not ; I swung the censer no more, my hands dropped listlessly by my side. My knees trembled, a dimness came before my eyes, and I approached the altar, as if I were a criminal on the way to execution. I felt as if all, all, were lost, and that my father was now, at last, in possession of my guilty secret.





CHAPTER XXXII.

LOST IN THE CLOUD.

IT is almost needless for me to relate what followed that dreadful morning. I could not appear at breakfast. Even Mr. Callaghan, after things had been explained to him in my half-distracted way, looked at matters in a serious light, and rightly judging, from what I had told him, that my father was not a man to be trifled with, especially as my apparent deliberate espousal of what might be called naked popery, was so offensive ; and besides when he had been as it were, so systematically deceived by myself, my mother, and my uncle, my tutor came to the decision that my father would very probably cast me off forever ; and, most likely losing all confidence in my mother's adhesion to the ante-marital arrangement made respecting my religious training, would seek a separation from her, if he had not done so already.

Mr. Callaghan said he had heard of similar cases which had resulted as he had indicated ; for he himself had known and felt something of the bitterness of religious persecution in a social and domestic way, a kind of persecution which evidently had the approval of religious persons who could not be persuaded to recognise a resort to the "boot" or "thumb-screw," but who nevertheless thought scorn and detraction a penalty which should be paid by those who dared to be sceptics

in anything relating to high-toned popular orthodoxy. I could not but feel greatly depressed, but I shall never forget his words of kindness, sympathy and encouragement at a time when I fully expected that I was just about to undergo the severest trial of my life. My father had probably seen my uncle immediately after having left the oratory, for I was told that arrangements had been made whereby we were all to meet in the parlor about ten o'clock. I was, I may say, in perfect misery during the time I had to wait, and were it not for Mr. Callaghan, to whom I confided my apprehensions, I should scarcely find courage for the coming interview.

The weather grew almost suddenly gloomy and misty, the clouds crowded thickly overhead, and not a bit of blue sky could be seen. How melancholy everything appeared; it seemed as if my fate was about to be decided forever. I looked on the deserted benches outside, and I really envied the poor people who had been fed there but an hour previously; and I think I should have willingly exchanged places even with "Jim," to have his unrestricted freedom to go from this "rattry" to that or the other as he thought most profitable, rather than meet the frown and hear the anticipated reproaches of my father, of which I somehow felt that I was now deserving.

The hour came at last. Oh, how my heart sank. I dared not raise my head as I entered the room. I sat close to the door ready, if need be, to run away from my only home and from contending relatives, ready to get rid of mental restraints and absurd formalities, ready to escape from creed and churches, from religion, or even from life itself, rather than be harassed as I had so long been. I sat there fearful and humbled, and though I felt that after all I was not conscious of having ever wilfully done a single act to make others unhappy, still I felt now as if I were a criminal.

Not a word was yet spoken. I could just discover that there were but my father, my uncle, my aunt, and myself in the room ; but my uncle instead of being disconcerted in the least by their stern manner, looked as defiantly at his visitors as if they had been mere inquisitive obtruders who were only deserving of his contempt. He could now well afford to assume this attitude. He was a popular priest, the leader of a peculiar sect, and, if yet not wealthy himself, he was fairly independent and had affluent supporters who held him in great esteem ; besides he had already defied bishops and ecclesiastical courts, as well as courts of common law ; and, as a clergyman, he was one who really wielded more influence in the community than some who were even distinguished for their learning, their literary ability, or their scientific attainments. His pulpit utterances, let them be ever so feeble or so insipid, were generally reported *in extenso* in the morning papers, while any information relating to the great or grand solid facts of science or philosophy were either excluded, or condensed into the smallest possible space in order that popular reverend gentlemen might beawarded more room for their prosy platitudes or doctrinal contentions. My uncle therefore appeared quite indifferent as to whether his visitors were pleased or offended. He and my father had, however, evidently arranged matters, before I entered the room. I well knew, that when my father had determined on any course, he would pursue it at once, and I felt that any decision he came to, respecting my mother or myself, would be carried out without delay.

As I could not yet raise my eyes to his face, I sat still, as if awaiting to hear the dreaded word which would pronounce my doom. My ear had become painfully acute, and just then, while listening attentively for the least utterance, I heard my aunt say in a low tone—"He is as deceitful as his mother, just as deceitful."

"Well, if he is, let him be," said my father in an audible voice. "The young man has followed his own choice, and I shall interfere no more."

No more?—Oh sad words! how they struck me, as they had struck many a poor forsaken one before! There was something very melancholy at the time, in the sound of those two dreary monosyllables. The tears rushed into my eyes, for I knew that the utterance of the words, "no more" had, many and many a time, been the death knell to some of the fondest hopes of the human heart.

"Oh Father," said I at last, with a tremulous voice, "Oh sir, if I have done anything wrong won't you forgive me—won't you? Oh I am sorry for all this. You might have known that I would not willingly offend you—I scarcely know what I have done. Do forgive me and don't leave me in anger."

Tears now filled my eyes, and my heavy breathing, could, I think, be heard outside the room. Even my uncle seemed as if half inclined to pity and to plead for me. I stood with my head bent, and my hands clasped, still fearing to approach him to whom I should have had such ready access. But no motion was made to receive the prodigal son. My humble attitude, or my expressions of sincere regret, seemed to have produced no more effect on my father or on my aunt, than the mere practice of a bit of acting would have had on the most careless observer. In fact they must have fancied that what I said or did was an unimpassioned performance—the prelude to an act of further treachery.

"How like a true Jesuit!" exclaimed my aunt, in a kind of half laugh.

"Oh aunt," said I, with the deepest contrition, "I am indeed very sorry for having done anything to cause your dislike. What can I do to prove that I am sorry for what has happened?"

"Nothing now," she replied tartly. "You sorry?—not in the least. You are a genuine papist, and I have suspected it for some time. You took the vows of a papist in the big room, and long before that you were one at heart. Oh, I know all about you, you smooth-faced, dissembling brat; your word or your promise would be no more binding than the oath of a Dominican priest."

My father here interrupted her; my uncle, though evidently displeased at my half retraction, said something in my defence. She however paid but little heed to him, yet, in spite of all my father said to her, she appeared as if scarcely able to restrain her indignation. I never saw her more angry; it reminded me of the time when she once hurled reproaches and accusations against poor Mrs. Reardon.

As I expected, the business was soon arranged. My father had read something pungent in one of the newspapers with regard to the oratory and my uncle's ritualistic practices therein, and one of my uncle's letters of a recent date to my mother, had by some means got into my father's hands, and in that he had read enough to reveal all. He then demanded the perusal of other similar letters, and a full explanation of every circumstance relative to my change of faith; and my mother, too candid, when thus questioned by him, to keep back the truth, confessed everything and absolutely took all the blame to herself. Whether Nancy Ferrin had any hand in the matter I cannot assert, but it is quite probable that some chance had offered to tell my aunt about my baptism in the big room; and the secret once in her possession would not be long reaching my father's ear.

As expected by Mr. Callaghan, my father informed us that he and my mother had separated. Arrangements were made between him and my uncle for her removal to Bristol. She

was for the future, or for such time as she thought proper, to reside with my uncle, and a fair annual allowance was to be given her. My uncle, very generously, offered both her and me his home without the payment of any consideration whatever, and he stated that any sum which my father considered sufficient to give, should be kept exclusively for her own private use and benefit.

The painful interview was soon brought to a close, and I knew the worst at last. I never imagined that anything I had done, or could do, would produce such a change in my father towards me. He had evidently made not the least allowance for my youth and inexperience, but in his wild hatred of what he deemed my deliberate and treacherous apostacy, every natural and tender feeling for me seemed to have been engulfed. Up to the last moment he showed no disposition to relent; he treated me as if I had been almost a perfect stranger, and when all was over, he and my aunt departed without a blessing or a curse, leaving me, as she at least hoped, to the cutting pangs of remorse, but in reality to my own sad thoughts,—as if I were fit only to be despised or forgotten forever.

How deeply troubled I was during the remainder of that dreary day! Even the sun hid his face; the weather grew cold and blustery, and for hours the rain poured down almost incessantly. I sat alone in the room, with my head bowed down, thinking of my mother, and of Shawn, and I felt at times how gladly I could die if by so doing my parents should again become reconciled and united.

In about half an hour from the time my father left us my uncle returned. He was very kind, and looked at me with real pity and affection, and though his words were most friendly and soothing, still my sense of loneliness was almost overwhelm-

ing. He did his best, in his own peculiar way, to cheer me up, and he told me that for the future I should look upon him as a father, and, that as circumstances had turned out, he should consider it his duty when the proper time came to do all in his power—and he had some influence—to give me a good start in life; that, as it was, I should be proud to have been called on to suffer for my religion, that I should never waver in my faith. It was a glorious thing, he said, to be asked, as a true believer, to take up the cross, and a still more glorious duty to bear it bravely.

He said much more to me in the kindest and most encouraging way, but no cheerful words from him, whatever, could have had then any effect. I still felt forsaken and depressed; and if my good uncle had only known at the moment how little I cared to suffer for what he called my religion, or for his, or for any other, Christian or heathen, or for bearing any cross, or even for wearing a martyr's crown, he might have been disposed to treat me far differently.

In my present mood, as I wanted to be alone, I left the house and strayed away some distance. The weather was still wet and disagreeable, yet I paid but little heed to the rain which was occasionally blown into my face. On I went, heedless which way my steps were turned so that I could be left to my own thoughts. I must have been out more than two hours when I found myself near the edge of a cliff that overlooked much of the city. My mind was somewhat diverted by the number of objects around, which from here attracted my attention. In the distance I could see the Cathedral, the Temple Church with its singular leaning tower. Not far from the spot on which I was standing, traces of an ancient Roman encampment could be discovered; and then there was the shipping—always interesting to me—and the thick black smoke

which ascended from some of the steam vessels in port, reminded me that my father was to sail in one of these that evening for home.

The impulse to see him once more, and, if possible, to speak to him, now became irresistible. I hurried away from the cliff, and never ceased walking until I stood on the quay at which the steamer *Frome* was moored. This vessel ran between Bristol and Cork, and it was on board of her, I learned, that my father was to take his passage for home. She was to leave in about half-an-hour. Most of the passengers were on board ; others were still arriving, and I looked around in the bustle to try and discover my father. He was not, however, to be seen on the deck of the vessel or anywhere else. As the rain continued I thought it probable that he might be in the cabin. Any way, to make sure, I still waited and watched. The only individual whom I knew in the number of persons about me was "Jim" of our oratory, who was carrying the valise or small trunk of some passenger.

The vessel would now leave in a few minutes, and just as I was about to give up all hopes of seeing my father, a close carriage drove up to the gangway. My father and my aunt stepped out, he led her on board, their baggage followed, and Jim earned another penny for some little service which he had rendered them. They were scarcely more than fairly on deck when the ship's last bell rung for her departure. How like a knell it sounded in my ears at the time. There was now scarcely a possible chance of speaking to my father any more, and I felt as exceedingly sad as if I were about to part with him forever. Any way, I thought I would make an attempt to get to him if but for a moment, but just as I was going to step on the plank-way leading to the ship, it was hauled in, and my effort was a failure.

A loud rush of steam now came, drowning every other sound, and when this deafening noise ceased, I could hear the wind blow through the rigging as if it wished to waft me a wild farewell. The ship's great sidewheels turned slowly round, and, beneath a sullen sky, she moved away from the shore to seek a fresh encounter with the distant waves in the Bristol Channel.

Oh, how my heart beat at the moment! and what a rush of melancholy ideas followed. Parting is to me always painful, but this parting—and in this particular way—was something more than dreadful. Could I not catch my father's eye once more? I ran and climbed up on a stone post at the very end of the quay, and with my arms extended I waved my hat and my handkerchief—I really think that I also shouted—yet apparently in vain, as there was no recognition. Now, again, I redoubled my efforts, for I could plainly see him standing near the stern of the ship looking towards me. He must have caught the signal, for see, he turns aside as if to call my aunt's attention. She comes and stands by his side and watches me for a few moments. She motions not to me, but soon walks away, as if to exhibit her disdain. Still *he* remains! O God, my father has not yet left me as she has! Will he not look upon me again? Yes, he turns; he sees me now, and though my signal is not yet answered, I can detect that there is some change in his manner, in my favor; for his hands are crossed, and his head is bent as if in regretful thought. I still wave to him, though my arms are tired with the exertion. He looks again, he does not avert his face, but there he yet stands alone, while his lessening form grows dimmer in the waning light. He must feel that I want to be restored, and to have a place in his affectionate remembrance. See! his hand is placed over his eyes; there is some deep meaning in this. Another moment and he answers. Great heavens! His hand high above

his head waves at last, his coveted signal of forgiveness! Oh, happiness! his old feeling for me has returned; for this last act is sufficient assurance. My little pennant of peace is still fluttering in the evening air, and I can yet see his in the fading light. My eyes now fill with tears, and, while I try to keep his receding form in view, a great black cloud of smoke from the funnel of the vessel winds around him and hides him from my sight. And while the heavily-freighted ship rushes onward to reach the wild sea, and hastens out to meet the lowering night, I still try to pierce the cloud in which he is enveloped; but the cloud remains, and, though I can catch an occasional glimpse of his answering signal, still held above his head, darkness is around him. I see no more of my father, and I have a terrible foreboding that I shall never, never see him again.





CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

I REMAINED on the wharf until the steamer was completely out of sight. Although the night had now approached and the weather had become almost stormy, I still strained my eyes, and had momentary fancies that I could see the ship, and my father by the stern still waving his last parting signal. I cannot say how much longer I might have remained had I not been aroused from my reverie by the call of a watchman, who must have had doubts of my sanity, or of my intentions, when he noticed me yet standing at such a time on the stone post at the end of the now lonely quay.

With a heavy heart I turned my steps homeward. My long and rather unusual absence must have caused some uneasiness to my friends. I thought of this now for the first time, and I hurried to get back in order to relieve them from any apprehensions regarding me; for my uncle and Mr. Callaghan must have observed how dejected I felt after my father had gone away.

Passing along a narrow street near the principal landings, I noticed a number of small shops. Some of these were places of so-called entertainment, in most of which I could hear the sound of music and dancing—or rather of tramping. Here strong liquors were sold, and into these low retreats sailors

were frequently enticed, and then kept by duly licensed land sharks, until the last shilling of their unsuspecting victims was abstracted. Others were places where a small stock of articles could be found for sale needful for sea-faring men ; and I knew by the three gilt balls hanging over the doors of other shops that these were the dens of a certain mean class of pawnbrokers, who gave trifling loans to needful or to drunken sailors, or to unemployed wanderers in a state of necessity, taking as security, watches, pistols, knives, coats, caps, or even shirts,—most of which would never be redeemed—no advance on anything being made unless that which was offered was at least worth four or five times the value of the sum required ; and, in many a case of extremity, a needful article, even of clothing, would be let go for a bare sixpence ; or a sailor, to satisfy his craving, might give his best knife, or his only handkerchief, for the mere price of “a glass of grog.”

As I went close to one of these pawn shops, I was surprised to see our Jim— or “rattry Jim,” as Mr. Callaghan called him—standing just inside the door. His back was towards me, for he seemed to be interested in some bargain or “operation” taking place at the counter or desk. I had some curiosity to know what Jim could be doing there at such a time, and I drew sufficiently near the little shop window, without being observed, to see those within as well as to hear their conversation. A woman stood at the counter, and the man behind it—evidently a Jew—was examining a cloth cloak, one which his customer had probably but lately removed from her shoulders. She was a delicate looking person in figure, and to all appearance needed, this cold evening, the covering with which she was about to part. I could only see a little of her side face, while she spoke a few words in a low tone to the proprietor, who apparently wished to undervalue the article.

"Vy, mi goot madam, pon mi vord of honour, eef I havint offered you all, all dat she is vort—all. Dat cloag, der mantle, is halv vorn alredy, you know dat, an halv-a-crown is all she is vort—all. See dere, she has been mended *ein, zwei, dreimal*—three time—one, two, three places. You can see for yourself, my tear madam, you can see for yourself, you know," and the Jew took some pains to discover and point out the places which, according to his view, had needed repair, or had been repaired, "*vielmal*."

"I know the cloak is not new," said the woman, "but I can assure you it has been well taken care of; the cloth alone cost more than two pounds, and you see it is quite good yet."

Though the voice was soft and pleading, there was something in the very sound of her words that almost startled me. It was a familiar voice, but where or when I had heard it before, I was at the moment quite unable to remember.

"Oh, you praise your own tings. *Das ist seher gut, aber*—but I may be the best judge, my good lady. But I say all vot I vill do now. I'll just make de geld, de money, for you drie, *das ist dree schilling*. Now, dat is all," and he raised his open hand as if to deprecate any further argument on the subject.

I could notice the unwillingness of the woman to accept his offer, but her need must have been pressing. She now spoke so low that I could not hear her reply. She seemed very reluctant to part with the cloak, but at last she held out her hand and took the money.

The Jewish dealer handed the cloak to a boy and told him to number it and put it away; he gave a ticket, or certificate, to the woman, and as she turned to leave the place, he looked elated, and muttered to himself in German, "*Sie hat es nicht thun mogen, aber was Kann ich dafur*."

"A nice place, mum, Oh, yes, shure as I live, a fine place,

ony thripunce for lodging; an' see iv I don't call in the mornin' an' take you to St. Phil's—that's the very rattry you want to find—an' I'll take you to matins, as they calls 'em; an' may I niver, iv after that you don't git yer breakfast free, an' all for thripunce, with ony a penny for my trouble.—That's all shure as I live—I'm blowed, mum, iv it ain't."

Jim said this in reply to some inquiry by the woman who had just left the pawn office, and to whom he was now acting as a kind of escort. It was plain that she wished to find some safe retreat for the night, and being a stranger, and no doubt in necessity, trusted to the guidance of "rattry" Jim.

I followed at a little distance and left them at the first street corner; my course being in a different direction. As I went along, though the wind blew fierce and cold, I forgot my father for the moment and tried to recollect where I had heard that woman's voice before. Indeed so keen was my desire to discover who she was that, were it not so late, I think I would have followed her to her lodgings in order to satisfy my curiosity; and then I thought what wretched lodgings she would have to be satisfied with if only a bare threepence could pay for the accommodation.

When I reached St. Philip's I found my uncle and Mr. Callaghan in serious conversation with our family physician. During my absence Mrs. Tracy, our housekeeper, had been taken dangerously unwell. She had been rather poorly for some time, and I heard the doctor say that her symptoms gave him very little hope. She might, he said, linger for a few days, but he plainly stated that, owing to her constitutional debility and her present very feeble state, she could not live another week unless Providence interposed, or unless some miracle should be wrought in her favor.

When my uncle heard this he was in deep thought for a few

moments. He had the greatest regard for his old housekeeper, and I saw that he was very much concerned about her; and when the doctor reasserted that neither physician's skill nor the most potent medicine that could be administered would now avail, I was a little surprised to hear my uncle say that we should try the "power of prayer,"—the prayer of one or more of God's divinely appointed and ordained ministers. He was, he said, satisfied that in her case that would prove a remedy, and, to this end, that special supplicatory services should be held in the oratory for her next morning.

The doctor, who was a leading member of my uncle's congregation, readily concurred. He might have had his private doubts, for I have reason to believe that his faith in his own professional treatment was far beyond his faith in any other curative experiment—especially one of an ecclesiastical kind—but, as my uncle's powerful recommendation among his people was worth cultivating, the doctor very wisely asserted his belief in the continuation of "Apostolic gifts." Was not my uncle—the doctor's beloved pastor—one of the genuine successors, one of the true priestly descent, and, this being so, his clerical power of healing might in this case be made manifest. Now that human efforts had, to all appearance, signally failed, if Mrs. Tracy recovered it would be another evidence to a scoffing multitude that God's divinely appointed ministers had still power to restore the sick and bid him who was diseased and prostrate to arise and take up his bed and walk.

I could see that my uncle felt pleased or flattered when he heard his friend the doctor make such observations, and I really think that he—like others of the "cloth"—could easily be persuaded to fancy himself possessed of superhuman powers. I sat up very late that night. My mind was disturbed by different feelings, and I could not rest. I thought of my father

and of our sad and singular parting. I thought of that strange voice which someway connected the woman I had seen that night with something of the past; and then when I reflected upon the languishing condition of poor Mrs. Tracy, I felt downcast and had no inclination for sleep.

After midnight the wind increased to a gale. At intervals the house seemed to tremble. Strange, wierd moanings could be heard outside, and the windows rattled as if some spirit of the storm was trying to gain admittance. I ventured to make bare one of the corner panes and to look out. The street, as far as I could see, was deserted. There was sufficient light to enable me to behold the clouds rushing about the dreary sky, and far out towards the sea everything appeared to be in a state of wildness and confusion. The night, and the storm, and the tempest on the great deep, made me shudder with apprehension when I thought of the danger to which my father might then be exposed on the treacherous waves of St. George's Channel.

The *Frome* was but a small vessel. She was old, and reputed not to be very seaworthy. As her captain was, however, known to be skilful and cautious, it was not considered that there was any particular risk in taking a short voyage from England to Ireland on board his ship. Anyway, do what I could, my fears increased, and, as the black night lingered, I imagined that the storm became more furious, and though I seldom prayed from the heart, though my lips at that solemn time gave no formal utterance, yet a deep, fervent petition—the petition of my anxious soul—was sighed for the safety of my father.

In an hour or so after this it grew much calmer and I fell asleep. But my sleep was not one of forgetfulness; my dreams brought back a more terrific storm than I had ever witnessed

when awake. I could hear the roar of the wild gale, and I imagined that the whole wide sea was one vast stretch of seething foam. Hidden rocks seemed to rise at every surge of a wave, and great fishes appeared to be crowding around as if in wait for their certain prey. In the gloom I could just see the *Frome* reeling, as it were, on her wild course to certain destruction. And there was my father now kneeling by the stern where I had last seen him. His hands were raised on high as if begging for mercy, and then I thought he saw me and shouted for my assistance. In a moment afterwards I saw the ship heaved upon a mighty billow, the breakers were almost under her bow, and then, when all prayers seemed to be of no avail, and when all hope seemed lost, I saw him rise from his knees and wave his little signal to me again. Then I heard a fearful crash; the *Frome* had disappeared, and her timbers were scattered in a thousand pieces over the wild and desolate waste of waters.

I arose very early next morning, but was quite unrefreshed. The weather was cold and dreary, and the remembrance of my dream greatly disturbed me. I was scarcely prepared to leave the room when I heard a rap at my door; and I was hurriedly requested to go and find the doctor. Mrs. Tracy was said to be dying. I was almost shocked. When I got down stairs I met Mr. Callaghan in the hall, and he told me not to leave the house as a messenger had already been sent for the physician. I saw my uncle in the parlor; he was seated in a chair with his head bent down and holding a handkerchief to his eyes. He appeared to be much affected at the idea of losing forever his old and trusted housekeeper, for whom I knew he had the greatest regard. I now felt satisfied that her end must be fast approaching, there was a solemnity about the place, and I could hear the muffled tread of the nurses up in her chamber, as they hastened in their services at the last sad moment.

We all waited impatiently for the doctor. He came at last, and he had hardly more than time to look at the face of his patient when he desired that we should all come in and take our final leave of our poor friend. Every one present was deeply grieved, and the few of us who had been intimate with her so long were unable to keep their tears. She knew us all to the last moment, and she died calm and resigned, murmuring the beloved names of her husband and son.

I felt her loss very much. Every year she had grown more attached to my uncle and his friends, even the poor who attended daily outside, had ever had her most humane consideration; and many of these afterwards wept when they could hear her voice of sympathy no longer. To me in particular she had shown many marks of the most tender regard. She had been more like a mother to me than anything else, and I shall miss her serene face and her gentle smile for ever. I should be most happy to feel assured that her fond anticipations had at last been realized, and that she had met her dear ones in some happier world than this, never, never more to part.

We had many poor friends with us that dreary morning. The benches outside were filled, and some who could not find seats stood silently around. It was evident that most of them came at this particular time more out of respect to the memory of her who had just departed than for any other object.

As there was to be no service in the oratory, Mr. Callaghan and I had more leisure to distribute among our needy visitors what had been provided for a breakfast. In order that none should be kept waiting too long we asked Jim to assist us. When he came near me he whispered that he had brought a "new convert to the rattry," that he thought she knew me, and wanted to say something to me in private. In a few moments I followed him to the door or gateway which led into our little

yard. A woman stood there alone. She seemed disinclined to speak while Jim was present. I told him to go and assist Mr. Callaghan, and when he left us, she uncovered her face, a face faded and worn since I had last seen it, but the features were readily recognized, and when she spoke I knew the voice again, it was that which I had heard in the pawn office the previous evening. How great was my surprise, for there, sadly changed in appearance, stood Mrs. Reardon.

Her story, since I had last seen her, was soon told. My aunt's anger or jealousy against her had increased to such a degree that she could not remain any longer in my aunt's house, even though Mr. Sharp, my uncle, had given her every assurance that neither she nor Bertha should be further disturbed. But Mr. Sharp's open protection had only added fuel to the flame. He could never counteract my aunt's misrepresentations, nor the scandalous unsupported assertions of Nancy Ferrin. Evil reports are double winged. In this case wise owls hooted them from steeples, and even from pulpits, and religious crows and ravens cawed them aloud from tree tops, as well as from orthodox tea tables. Highly moral church members whispered accusations against him, and, in a fit of honest indignation, he took leave of church, pastor, and brethren, and rather irreverently consigned them all to the special care of that malign potentate who has been accused by true believers of having so often and so successfully counteracted the beneficent designs of Providence; and bands of pious females who would turn aside their heads in holy contempt should they chance to meet an erring sister in the street, now affected to be mentally disquieted lest even the mention of the name of this poor persecuted woman should produce contamination.

Grossly traduced by so-called moral and religious society, Mrs. Reardon could seldom remain more than a few months in

one neighborhood. She had been obliged to shift about from place to place, and from town to town. But as the shafts of malice were sure to follow, if defamation had not already preceded her, she had often found herself in a very distressed position. Mr. Sharp, however, honestly feeling himself under an obligation to assist her, did aid her as well as he could, in defiance of every evil tongue, but mostly in such a manner that the recipient of his benevolence seldom knew whence it came. He also succeeded in obtaining a situation for Bertha as a kind of governess in the family of an old friend, and though Mrs. Reardon was very loth to part with her daughter, yet for her sake she made a sacrifice, but with the hope of an early reunion.

Time passed away, and greatly wearied with her wandering, unsettled life, she decided on leaving Ireland again. She knew, of course, that I was in Bristol. She also knew that I had always been most friendly to her, and under the impression that I might be of service to her in some way, she fled from her persecutors and arrived in Bristol the very evening that my father and my aunt took their strange departure from St. Philip's. It was fortunate that she chanced to meet Jim at that particular time. Her purse and the small amount which it contained had been stolen, no doubt within a few minutes after she landed, and owing to this mishap she had been obliged to pledge her cloak as I had witnessed.

That very forenoon I sent Jim to the pawnbroker—for he knew the place well—and released this article. She permitted me to provide for her until we should have more leisure to confer. The day after the interment of poor Mrs. Tracy, I had, however, the great satisfaction of seeing Mrs. Reardon installed as my uncle's housekeeper on my sole recommendation.

A week had now passed since my father had turned away from us at Bristol—a dreary, lonely week since I had seen him

wave his signal of adieu from the sternpost of the vessel that had borne him off near the approach of night. Oh how gloomy were the hours, and the days, and the nights, of that harassing period while I waited so anxiously for the news of his safe arrival home. But day after day went by, and I could get no satisfactory reply to my eager inquiries—the vague rumors were sickening—nothing was heard of the ship in which he had sailed, and how dreadful was my apprehension when at the end of that long, long week of waiting, there came back no tidings of the “FROME.”





CHAPTER XXXIV.

"WHAT ARE THE WILD WAVES SAYING?"

HOW many of the pure in heart and of the gentle in spirit are classed among the worthless or depraved, and have to remain among the injured and unpitied through adverse circumstances over which they have scarcely ever had the least control. How many of the upright and noble-minded have been maligned, misrepresented, and misunderstood, in consequence of their having been embarrassed by intricate social ordinances comprehended by few, or by artificial rules and fine-drawn moral precedents which perplex the uninitiated and the unsuspecting; by codes and formulas which often rudely domineer over honest, natural impulses, that are sometimes rated, by affected advocates of conformity, as evidences of a wayward, or of a depraved disposition. How many of the kind, the tender, and the well-meaning, especially among women, have been anathematized for an only sin, and thrust among the despised and rejected, because, having been of a too trustful nature, they were deceived, and the one, and it may be the only one, false step which they may have unwittingly taken and bitterly repented of, has brought upon themselves the most uncharitable scorn and contempt, vastly disproportionate to the social offence, placing them almost forever outside the pale of so-called respectable society. How many of such as these are

left under a ban of humiliation, are forced to cast their lot among the proscribed, and to spend a weary life almost entirely excluded from genial intercourse and association, from hallowed sympathy, and from the sweet, blessed mercies of charity and reconciliation.

Alas, for the Christian compassion which is too generally dealt out to the fallen or the unfortunate, by the flaunting, pharisaical, self-righteousness of the times ! How little of real humanity has been found in that specious morality which, while pretentiously exhibiting an arbitrary code of ethics, and displaying its gilt-edged certificate of purity—often a glittering counterfeit—hides its own dissolute features behind a mask of innocence or piety, and, as if dreading pollution, loftily scorns to touch the trembling hand, frequently held out in vain, which mutely pleads for pity.

O ye exemplary women of the great moral world, ye luminous leading stars of society, ye who can formally say so much to your weak or erring sisters about repentance and forgiveness, know ye not that there is a sin which, for many of them, ye "have never forgiveness;" a sin which ye may deem but a mere frailty in their brothers, but a deep, indelible stain upon the character of her who may have been wilfully and treacherously wronged, or whose pitiful poverty or deprivation may have forced her reluctantly to make a choice between impurity and death. And then, O ye immaculate, while spurning the poor suffering creature who has been betrayed, ye can, as a rule, overlook the infamy of the betrayer, ye can, without much delay, exalt him to the position of a hero, and—wonderful obliviousness—even take him to your own bosoms !

O ye amiable regulators of social rewards and punishments, to whose sole decision is generally left the pardon, or overlooking or condemnation of the faults of those of your own fair sex,

how repeatedly in pronouncing upon a sister's frailties or misfortune, have ye become masculine in sternness, virile in hate, and unwomanly in vindictiveness ! In your relentlessness as judges, what sighs ye have drawn from sorrowful bosoms, what bitter tears ye have caused to be shed, what hearts ye have riven, what spirits ye have crushed, what sudden and violent deaths ye have occasioned, and, if your religious doctrines of predestination or of retribution be true, what souls ye have consigned to eternal perdition !

If delightful places of honor and distinction in this sublunary sphere could be reserved for the really excellent of the earth, or if golden thrones or pearly seats of glory could be found for those worthy of being ranked among saints or angels in any brighter world than this, the proudest positions on earth, and the most beautiful retreats in heaven should be set apart for benevolent and heroic women, who, in defiance of almost inexorable social regulations, and inhuman prejudices, will not only pity her who has been misled through misfortune, but who will readily extend the hand of reconciliation to a repentant sister ; and who shall also insist that any penalty due for social delinquencies shall be paid impartially by all alike without any distinction as to sex ; and, particularly, that, where a woman has erred, some blessed ray of hope shall be held out that her past sin, or her indiscretion, shall not be an eternal bar to her social restoration.

Had one of the angels I have just spoken of entered our dwelling, our home could not have been more like heaven than Mrs. Reardon made it within a week. Poor Mrs. Tracy, during her indisposition, had been unable to give matters her usual supervision, a laxity of household discipline had consequently taken place, and there was, therefore, some neglect and irregularity. But under Mrs. Reardon's management things were

quickly restored to order, duties within the house went on like clock-work, and there was an air of peace and content about the place which was delightful. My uncle, I knew, must have thought so. He seemed to care more about household affairs than he ever had before. He appeared very much pleased when consulted by his new housekeeper; he readily approved of her suggestions, and concurred most cheerfully in any change recommended by her. Indeed, it was quite apparent that he took unusual interest in Mrs. Reardon. He must have considered her a paragon of excellence, not alone as a housekeeper, but as a gentle, pious lady of exquisite disposition and attainments, and it somehow struck me that my uncle fancied that she could not be surpassed either in mind or person. It was evident that he enjoyed her society. Instead of reading alone in his study, as he used to do, he would join her in the parlor, after tea—a proposal of his own,—and either read to her, or entertain her in some other way, while she sat sewing at the opposite side of the table. For no matter how busy she had been kept during the day, when evening came, in order to please him and perhaps to make the place look more home-like and cheerful, she would remain down stairs and ply her needle as diligently almost as of old, as if she had some task work to perform which needed every moment without intermission.

Mr. Callaghan also seemed to feel the attraction of her presence; he showed this in many odd and peculiar ways. Of old he had mostly retired to his own room after tea, to enjoy his pipe, assist my studies, and often tell me droll stories; but now, when a certain hour came, he would stroll awkwardly into the room, and with a kind of shy look take a seat in a corner and appear to be solely interested in my uncle's reading or conversation. I may have been mistaken, but once or twice it struck me that my uncle seemed to feel

rather disconcerted when Mr. Callaghan entered the room, as if his entrance was a kind of interruption, or perhaps intrusion ; but, as it was, no one, I think, appeared to notice this but myself. Mrs. Reardon had not been long with us when Mr. Callaghan told me he had never found the house so like a real home. He became more spruce in appearance, more cautious in his habits, and I fancy that he sought opportunities to have a few words with our new housekeeper, or to meet her, as if by chance, on some occasions when she went out for a walk. With regard to my uncle, the clerical sternness, or coldness, or dignity sometimes affected by him seemed to have been warmed down frequently to more than geniality, and I really feel certain that one and all wished for the approach of those quiet evenings so that we could meet and spend an hour or two together before bed-time.

"A most excellent woman, John," said my uncle to me, in a kind of confidential manner, one day when we were alone. "A most exemplary person, and far in advance of us in religious matters ; for even our services at the oratory do not, it seems, come up to her standard of perfection." He spoke in an under tone, as if afraid of being overheard by any one but myself.

"You know she is a Roman Catholic, uncle."

"Yes, yes. I know that," he replied, "I value her more on that account. She is most conscientious in that respect, yet I somehow thought we had already made a sufficiently near approach to the original to have it pass almost for the thing itself."

"Indeed you have, uncle. Many think you are the same all but in the name ; but a genuine Roman Catholic who fancies that his creed is the primitive religious belief unchanged and unchangeable, can have scarcely more than contempt for that which may appear to him to be but an imitation of the Mother Church. Mrs. Reardon can see a difference where perhaps you

or I could not. The most imperfect system is often buoyed up by innate self-consequence, and that is as often developed into a feeling of supremacy by the servile action of imitators."

My uncle drew his hand two or three times thoughtfully across his forehead. "I won't say," said he, almost soliloquising; "I won't say that the Catholic Church is an imperfect system. There is a difference between us, I suppose—there must be, of course, for priests are now required to be celibates. It was not, however; always thus, still they are inexorable on this point—and—and—" He finished the sentence with a little sigh, as if he felt there was some obstacle in the way, or some virtue or excellence in pure Romanism which he feared that he would never be able to attain.

One evening after this, when Mr. O'Callaghan appeared to be unusually excited—I fear he had gone alone to test the wine in the oratory,—he remained in his room, and was earnest in his desire that I should stay with him, but was careful not to be seen by anyone else. He was inclined to be confidential, yet he seemed unwilling or unable to tell all he evidently wished to say. I certainly thought that it must be something of a very peculiar nature when he felt reluctant to impart his mind to me; to whom he had revealed the principal trials and troubles of his life. He made one or two abortive attempts and then grew silent.

"Arrah, Jack," said he at last, touching me on the shoulder, and using his broadest brogue—his favorite mode of expression when he was rather "elevated"—"Arrah, Jack, I'm bothered to death, so I am; me heart is like a lump of lead, so it is; an' iv I'm not a'most—yis, bi the mortal, altogether—in the very mess I was wonce before—an' a'most half crazy in the bargain—there's no truth in what I say. Oh, be gor, I'm in for it now, and that's beyant the beyants, so it is."

Mr. O'Callaghan was obviously troubled about something of a serious nature ; so far I had not the most remote idea of what it could be, but when he raised his head and asked me a certain question I knew all in a moment.

"Jack, were you ever in love?"

There was a pause, for in my astonishment at such a question I made no reply.

"Of course you weren't—no not yit. Well av you ain't you will be ; it's as certain to come as death, so it is, an' the divil a know I know which is the worst—one is as bad as the other ; be the powers, as I am now, av I had to choose I'd rather be a daycent ghost at wance than the livin' scarecrow I'm likely to be av this thing goes on much farther. Oh," said he, looking down and tapping the floor with his foot, "I'm in a beautiful state, ain't I?"

What reply could I make? I could say nothing.

"Say, Jack," said he pulling me towards him, and putting his mouth close to my ear, "she's the same one, be all that's good, the very same one I tould you about that I had seen long ago—an angel from heaven, Jack—an' iv I'm not head over heels in love agin, the divil a man was iver in the same unfortunate state before me. Oyea, Jack, what the divil am I to do wid myself at all at all? An' thin there's the ould fellow, shure he watches me like a fox, so he does, an' av I happen to meet her alone—which is not very often—I can hardly git a chance to git in a word edgeways about the sun, or the moon, or the weather, or iny livin' thing else, until he's right at me heels givin' me a look which exactly manes, 'What the mischief are ye doin' here ye dirty blaguard ye,' an' thin—but stop avick." Here Mr. Callaghan closed his eye and gave me a wonderful knowing look with the other. "Whisper, Jack, *cugger alanna*. There's a kick in the ould fellow yit, ye may take yer solemn oath of *that*."

I must confess that I was rather uncertain as to his meaning, but he hurriedly proceeded to enlighten me.

"Oh, don't look so bewildered, there's a kick in him yit I tell ye. *Nabochlish*, av I don't know *that* I'm the biggest *omadhawn* out. Wait a little, *avick*, an' av ye don't find out for yerself I'm no prophet. Shure he's watchin' her, an' tendin' her, an' waitin' on her, an' colloquein' wid her, an' iv he's not soon beseechin' her—iv he's not been at it a'ready—I'll let you call me the stupidist *gommo* out av Bedlam. Oh shure; I see how its been goin' on for some time! He talks av havin' nuns, or collectin' a lot uv thim ugly ould unmarried virgins around him—the Lord save us, that nobody else would have!—to pray here an' there, an' to mope about the oratory, jest as iv he was determined to scare the viry divil himself away from the place. I've seen some uv thim faymale scarecrows that were pious an' wrinkled enough to make Ould Nick hop off purty quick whin he saw thim comin'. But yer uncle will niver make a nun uv her. No, *ma bouchall*, he won't do that. She'll niver cut off her purty long hair, an' bandage her head up in thim black an' white things that are too ugly even to ornament a dead corpse. He'd niver have her sweet face turn pale wid piety, or change God's natest model into deformity for the sake uv havin' her look religious. No, Jack, he wont do that; he'd rather see Satan, or Beelzebub, or Lucifer, or Ould Nick, or whatever other polite title you may give the Divil himself, ramble around at large among saints an' sinners alike—which is, as you know we are tould, his lawful occupation—than rob her uv her natural beauty to make a gloomy ugly nun or even a Mother Abbess uv her. Shure she's a livin' blessed angel as it is, an' maybe he doesn't know it; an' he'd rather live on buttermilk an' *crubeens* wid her in a hovel, than have port wine an' roast beef in a bower uv roses wid any one else. Arrah Jack, he's

me rival, me deadly rival, that's the holy all there's about it—the pair uv 'em will soon be the death uv me, an' now I fear there's nothin' for me but to pack up an' lave this vale uv tears at once, an', be gor, from what I can see, the sooner the better for me own sweet self."

He said much more in the same strain, and from what I had already seen and heard I could not but think that there was something strange and peculiar in his words and manner, as well as in my uncle's, whenever Mrs. Reardon became the subject of conversation. I was of course surprised when I fully discovered my uncle's weakness in allowing himself to be controlled, as he really seemed to be, by an almost sudden attachment for his housekeeper. As for her, it was however plain to be seen that she had not the remotest idea that the friendship which was shown her since she had assumed charge at St. Philip's, was anything more than the ordinary kind; and from what I knew of her I felt almost certain that she would never again encourage anyone, no matter what his position, to entertain for her any feeling of a more tender nature. To my mind she was stern, in this respect, and though my uncle was old enough to be her father, or perhaps her grandfather, I now began to fear that on her account an alienation or a separation would take place before long between Mr. Callaghan and himself, and that he would indulge his infatuation until, sooner or later, he became awakened from a very foolish dream.

I must say that I was more troubled than amused when I discovered how things were situated in our hitherto quiet home. At any other time I might have thought more of the matter, but as my mind was so very uneasy on account of my father, I could think but of little else than that which concerned him.

Next morning after breakfast, while my uncle was reading the latest news, I chanced to turn my eyes towards him and

saw a very grave expression suddenly appear in his face. Having read and apparently re-read that which must have been something of serious importance, he looked at me, and, without saying a word, pointed to the item of news in order that I might peruse it also. The first words were sufficient to convey the dreadful intelligence. The steamer, with all on board, in which my father had sailed from Bristol, had been lost in the Channel almost to a certainty. Pieces of the wreck had been found scattered along the coast, and one of the ship's boats marked “*Frome*” had been discovered stranded bottom upwards. Barrels, and bales of goods known to have formed part of the cargo of the ill-fated vessel had also been cast ashore, but, so far, not a human body had been seen. Most probably any who had tried to escape in the boats of the steamer had perished; for sea-faring men had freely expressed the conviction that no ordinary pinnace or launch could have ever reached shore in safety during the storm that had raged on the night of the departure of the *Frome* from Bristol.

Harassed by dreadful forebodings as I had been during the past week, I was yet scarcely prepared for such fearful intelligence. I could hardly believe in the possibility of such a catastrophe as the newspaper had announced; but as hour after hour passed, and as neither my uncle nor Mr. Callaghan, nor any one else, held out the least hope, I settled down into the sullen conviction that I would never see my poor father again, and that he and my aunt had met their sad fate together.

Nothing can equal woman's sympathy during the hours of our saddest bereavement. The kindness and tenderness of Mrs. Reardon at that time I shall never forget; she said all that her motherly heart could suggest. She could pity me, and weep with me, and pray for me, but according to her religious views, she could not supplicate for the souls of the heretic dead.

—this is virtually forbidden by the Catholic Church. To her mind their eternal destiny must have been fixed and unalterable. Yet though indifferent, or even rather skeptical as I was at other times, I now felt an impulse to pray. To pray for what? I felt that no prayer of mine could restore those whom I had lost, or alter, or ameliorate the inevitable. I was even doubtful that there was an Omnipotence who could perform such a miracle. Still I felt constrained to entreat, and as no form of church-prayer could then supply words to ease the fullness of my soul at that moment, I retired to my room and with streaming eyes fell on my knees, and then, while looking upwards to some great unknown Power, I implored for pity on my own condition and for mercy on the beloved dead. It was my most fervent petition, yet alas, my prayer without faith.





CHAPTER XXXV.

LOVE'S PUREST FOUNT.

THAT evening I received a letter from home containing the most heartrending words I had ever read. It was from my brother, who had been for some time almost in sole charge of my father's business. I was urged to return to Ireland at once. The terrible news of the loss of the *Frome* and of my father's sad fate, had given such a shock to my mother that her life was despaired of. I was entreated by every tender and filial consideration to hasten to her bedside, as her constant prayer was to be permitted to see me once more before she died.

Within two days from that time I stood once more in the Big Room in our house at Cove. With what mournful feelings I entered the dwelling, and how sad and desolate it seemed to be without my father's presence or even the sound of his voice. My mother's bed was in a corner, near one of the windows, where my little cot once used to stand, previous to the time I had been frightened by the midnight apparition of my younger days. It was a quiet evening; all was still around, and we could hear with the greatest distinctness the soft farewell notes of the birds in the garden as if they were bidding adieu to the departing day. It was a beautiful yet a solemn hour. A faint ray of sunlight stole in and rested for a moment on my mother's languid face, and then spread out around her head as if typical of the

glory that would surround her in some happier state of existence. Even were such an idea a delusion it was comforting to me at the moment, for I shuddered at the bare thought of her individuality being swept away for ever. Such a gentle and submissive spirit as she possessed would, I felt, be necessary for the guidance and example for others even in some future state of being. I believed that if a mind as pure as hers had once become extinct that its renascence would be impossible.

Ah, me, what a change ! The room was as silent as death. We could scarcely hear her breathe. Her eyes, her loving eyes, were closed in a kind of sleep which might have been easily mistaken for the last deep repose of one whose tender, wearied heart had long been too familiar with care. Yet at moments the sleep was troubled. She muttered, but her words were mostly inaudible, yet at intervals I could hear my father's name and mine, and then the Virgin's name, as if pleading for the lost and the beloved.

Oh, the pitiful change in that dear face ! The brow was pallid, the cheek hollow, the lip blanched, and the once brown tresses, which I had so much admired, now lay faded and scattered nearly as white as the pillow on which they rested. These mournful alterations in her appearance would not have been so saddening could I have been assured by some infallible authority, or some undoubted evidence that they were necessary for her rejuvenation in some happier sphere, or for a suitable preparation for some glorious immortality where there would be no more strife, no more sorrow, no more tears and no more parting ; could I feel certain that now, near the end of her life of trial and suppressed emotions, she was like the tender plant which has been in a manner strengthened in the shade in order that it may be fit to be transplanted into a blooming garden among flowers and sunshine.

But where could I find such an assurance, such a certainty? The conflicting doctrines and speculations of professed theologians, of the expounders of contradictory revelations, only serve to bewilder, or so far to raise a cloud of deep doubt before my mind which made the shadowy Hereafter more dim and distant than ever. We may have longings for wealth, for happiness and for immortality, but these yearnings, though natural, are no evidence that that which we ardently desire shall ever be placed within our reach. Unanswered prayer leaves many a heart without a hope. The aspirations which engender blissful expectations are just as natural as our dreams; if one is a delusion both may be delusions. Man's wishes are the wings of his imagination. Though our flights of fancy should soar heavenward continually, they will never bring us nearer to the stars than the earth on which we stand and from which we gaze.

If there be a baptism of affliction through which every one must pass that enters heaven, as I looked on the wan face of my dear mother I felt that she had had her afflictions, and that if there was a brighter world above, she by reason of her submission and long endurance, had acquired a title to admission therein. But my mother, if even in heaven, might for an indefinite period, or what might seem forever, be away from us, and the dread of separation became so strong that I would gladly let her forfeit her present right to a celestial throne so that she could remain with us longer.

Who can think of the sundering of such mortal ties without a shudder? Who can fathom the profound affection of a mother? Where can be found so disinterested a friend? True love may be true, but it is false and inconstant when compared with her enduring fondness. The most sacred vow may be given as binding forever, but it is only a fragile tie, an affec-

tation, a mere gossamer web, compared with the deep expression of a mother's devotion or with the clasping tendrils of a mother's heart. The world may flatter, the voice of the multitude may proclaim you a hero, youth and beauty may sing your praises, age may give you its benedictions, honours may be lavished and wealth poured out for your acceptance; with these you may in time become wearied and satiated, but to the steady welling up of the clear, pure, beautiful and generous spring of a mother's love you never, never can become indifferent. It is the greatest solace for the unfortunate; it is the brightest and most cheerful ray around the virtuous and happy. If there is anything in this sublunary state of existence which may have had its origin in some supernal sphere, it must surely be that holiest of all human emotions—a mother's love.

Thinking of what she had been to me I could not suppress my tears. My heart sank as I saw the well marked indications, the stealthy approach of the "last great enemy," an enemy more terrible to me than it was to the gentle spirit it came to overwhelm. I would have banished foreboding thoughts at the time, but how could I? For there were the shadows outlined on her face which I saw at a glance would grow thicker and darker until it was night. Even before I entered the room, when good old Shawn met me at the gate, the peculiar pressure of his hand told me what his lips would not utter.

We let her sleep—she had been wakeful for some time previous to my arrival—and while she seemed to be making terms with Death, or in audience with the "King of Terrors," she would open her eyes for a moment and look afar as if taking leave of the fading visions of life, or trying to keep in view the dim receding scenes of her memory. She appeared to have a vista of Eternity, and to be glancing at the well-known departed forms that stood on either side of the long, dark

avenue which led from life to the dreary Beyond, or to Oblivion. It seemed as if she were calmly engaged in a leave-taking of the past, and we let her indulge in the solemn retrospection.

Leaving her, therefore, undisturbed, I had an opportunity to look around and observe what was most noticeable, and say something more to those near me, to whom I had addressed only a few words since my arrival. My brother was greatly cast down ; my sister was in tears. She had grown to be a fine young woman, but I was almost shocked to see her disfigured by a dark, slovenly convent garb, which greatly detracted from her appearance. I was told that she was about to become a nun partly in compliance with my mother's desire, and partly out of that kind of religious romantic idea which has prematurely blasted and withered so many a young life, often thoughtlessly yielded up and sacrificed to the grim, rapacious ogre of a peculiar system of theology. I felt greatly pained to witness such an evidence of her infatuation, but I could not express my feelings to her regarding this at the time. There was happily another lady present, whose features had changed, but not so much as to be beyond my easy recognition. It was Bertha Reardon, the former little Bertha whom I had first met in my uncle Sharp's house. She had greatly improved in personal appearance, and was very much pleased to see me again, and to hear all I could tell her about her mother. While on a visit to a family in which Bertha was engaged as a governess, my sister had become acquainted with her, and Bertha, having heard of our sudden affliction, hastened to offer her sympathy, and at my mother's special request—she had taken a particular fancy to her—had remained until the present time.

But there was one absent who, almost above all others, I then wished to see? Where was little Jane, the gentle companion of my earlier years, whose sisterly attention to me

during my illness in that very room was now brought powerfully to my recollection? Where was she who had made so deep an impression on my mind as well as on my heart in days gone by? How I upbraided myself for my affected indifference! For some reason which I can hardly explain, some peculiar embarrassment, I had not latterly made such enquiries about her, as I really felt inclined to do; it was even a surprise to myself to find with what reluctance I could but simply mention her name to another. Every familiar object around reminded me of her, but, alas, she was away, and from what had taken place, I feared that I should never meet her again. As it was, I felt a great hesitation to ask the least question concerning her, lest some peculiar motive should be attributed to me for so doing. Every moment I expected to hear some allusion to her, or to her father, Mr. Casey, but so far no one had made any remark whatever which could offer me an opportunity to introduce a subject in which I felt so deep an interest.

But could I not speak freely to Shawn? When I thought of this every difficulty seemed to disappear, and when I spoke to him, I learned that about a year previously, Mr. Casey had taken a sudden notion to travel, and that he and Jane had called to take leave before their departure. Shawn assured me that Jane had felt very sorry when she was informed of the dissolution of the firm of "Fairband and Casey," and that she had always made special inquiries about me whenever she chanced to visit my mother. He told me that Jane had once spoken to him in a kind of confidential manner, and had mentioned my name, expressing the deepest regret that we had all been so unexpectedly separated. She told him that she would like to write to me before she left Ireland with her father, but she supposed that I might not now care to hear from her. She hinted that perhaps I had met with others in whom I could

take a greater interest, and that as so long a time had passed since we last met, I must now have almost forgotten her. She also told him how sorry she had felt in not having seen me while at home on my short visit.

I asked Shawn if anything had lately been heard from her or Mr. Casey. He replied that a few days before my father had left home for Bristol, it had been rumored that Mr. Casey was about to bestow, or had bestowed, the hand of his daughter on some wealthy foreign merchant. A report had subsequently been circulated that Miss Casey had actually been wedded to a Spanish or Italian noble who had fallen violently in love with her, but as the gossiping Nancy Ferrin, who was still a spinster, had had something to do with the story, Shawn was but little inclined to place much reliance on that part of the news; still, other circumstances led him to think that there might probably be some truth in what had been said as to Jane's engagement; for more than a year before that he had heard that some rich gentleman "abroad" had been paying her great attention.

Scarcely disposed as I might be to mind anything that the amiable Nancy Ferrin had said concerning Jane, I could not but feel great uneasiness after what I had heard. At any other time I could possibly have reasoned away my apprehensions, but now I was incapable of so doing. My fears would persuade me that the report was true. I became almost despondent and I looked back on the happy days I had spent with Jane as being but the bright vision of a blissful dream from which I had become rudely awakened. Within a single day, even within a few hours, I might lose one of the tenderest mothers that ever lived, and I could not resist the impression that through my culpable carelessness or negligence I had wounded the sensibilities of a gentle nature, and that I had already lost a being whose sympathy could do most to assuage my grief or lighten

my affliction, or lend a ray of pure happiness to the further journey of life which I now feared I would have to travel gloomy and alone.

The altar was again erected in the recess. Mass had been said there that morning by my uncle—my mother's brother—who had been staying in the house since the sad news of my father's death had been conveyed to him. I thought how soon that altar might again be draped in black, and the solemn service for the dead be again repeated for the repose of a soul that was now, as it were, fluttering to escape its earthly tene-ment.

It was nearly midnight. We who were watching in the Big Room were suddenly startled by a voice calling out my name. I hastened to my mother's side, she clasped me in her silent embrace, while the pent-up feelings of my heart suddenly gave way and my tears streamed down over her face. Those who witnessed this affectionate recognition were deeply touched. "I knew," said she, with great tenderness, "that you would come. I knew that my prayers would be heard; for in my dream there came a beautiful vision, and I just saw you led in by the Virgin to my bedside. O, blessed Mary, how grateful I am for this favor!" She held my hand and looked at me silently for some time, as if in the enjoyment of the greatest happiness while gazing on my face.

"How like you are to him! O, John, how like you are to your poor father! Alas for your poor father, John! Shall I never meet him more? How can I get over the great gulf that may forever be between us? Your poor father, John, gone, gone, and, oh, perhaps to what a dreary interminable distance! Oh, that I could pray for him before I leave you! but this is forbidden. Would that his soul were among those of the faithful departed, how I should pour out mine for him now in inter-

cessions to the heavenly Virgin ! But painful though it be to be deprived of the privilege of offering up our prayers for the repose of his soul, of the felicity it would be to me at my latest moment, we must be reconciled to the ordinances of the Church, and leave him to God. Oh, that I could now hear but a single Mass celebrated there for him ?" and she pointed to the altar. "Had I vast wealth I would willingly make it an offering for such a benefit ! What felicity it would be to me now to be permitted even to say, 'God be merciful to him a sinner !' Alas, alas, he placed himself beyond the reach of our supplications, and we must only submit to the mysterious inevitable. But O, John, be faithful, be faithful unto death ! Ever remember that there is only one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and one True Church. We have its authority for making this assertion, *and that none can be saved out of it.* Child, be therefore faithful ! Your steadfastness has been my greatest comfort. So far I have heard that you have been all that is desirable. Continue, continue ! My prayers for your guidance have been constant, and I have had a blessed assurance that my beseeching has not been in vain. Remain within the fold ; ever remain there ; it is your only safety ! See ! Your sister has already made a happy choice, and has in the days of her youth wisely rejected the world and its vanities. Dear child, unite your prayers with hers for your brother, and all may yet be well."

She spoke a few more affectionate words, then she lowered what she wished to say to whispers, until they grew so faint as scarcely to reach my ear, and soon after this she relapsed into a semi-unconscious state. My uncle, the priest, who sat up with us that night, read again in a low voice some Latin prayers appropriate for a person in her condition, and while we listened to his murmuring utterances, the monotonous fall

of the rain, which had been descending for some hours, and the wind which rushed about at intervals with melancholy sound, added much to the solemnity of the time and place.

An hour or so before the dawn my mother revived again. She had no pain, she was much calmer, but there was that peculiar expression of countenance which plainly indicated that the finger of Death was already pressed upon her brow, and that the faintest hope which any might have indulged of her recovery, must now be abandoned for ever. She evidently knew that she was about to take her departure. She appeared gratified to see us standing around her bed. She looked from face to face, as if the sympathy she could gather in each was a balm to her feelings at the moment; and when she withdrew her eyes a faint smile could be seen like a delicate gleam softening the deep shadow which seemed to be spreading around her.

The rain was still falling, and she listened as if even in its dull sound there was something soothing. In a little time afterwards she made an effort to sit up. We assisted her and propped her up with pillows. She then drew from her bosom the old likeness of my aunt Mary, the very portrait which I had once found in the recess near the altar, and also a little picture of the Virgin which she always carried. She held these before her in her attenuated hands, and while looking intently at the face, venerated almost above all others by every true Catholic, she commenced to sing in a low, sweet voice, a little hymn which, many years ago, she had composed herself.

Mary, sinner's friend, be near,
Ere I shed my latest tear,
Ere I breathe my latest sigh,
Be thy sacred presence nigh.
Come, O blessed Guide, to me,
Ere my spirit is set free.

Bright, and beautiful, and best,
Let me on thy bosom rest,
Ever gentle, blessed Queen,
Turn on me thy look serene.
Bid my ling'ring fears depart;
Press me to thy sacred heart.

When the last dread day is near,
When the Judge with look severe,
Summons all around the throne,
All their vileness there to own,
Then, O Virgin, plead for me,
Hide me in thy purity.

How I sobbed to hear my mother sing her last song, to hear her tender, gentle voice, perhaps for the last time! Every eye but hers was suffused by sorrow, and the rain fell faster, as if Nature desired to mingle her tears with our own. My mother motioned to be let lie down again. She appeared to make an effort to listen to the sound of the wind, and in a moment or two she raised one of her thin hands and whispered, cautiously,

"Hark to the voices, to the voices, to the song of the redeemed! They take up the strain. Listen, listen!"

It was almost day. Towards the east we could see a slight opening in the clouds, which were now fringed with a delicate, roseate light, and still beyond we could just discover a little patch of limpid sky. My dear mother turned her face to the window. Her last gaze was fixed upon the distant blue aperture. It was like a drawing aside of the portals of heaven for her admission. She gave one long, lingering look at what might have appeared to her to be the celestial gates, and then she closed her eyes forever.

Ere it was fully day her pure spirit had gone forth to enter upon its eternal rest, and at the solemn moment we suppressed our sighs, and in silent grief we stood with bowed heads in the presence of the sacred dead.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN ROME.

IN less than three months from the time of my mother's death, I was in Rome. I had hastened away from home, indulging a hope that a visit to the Eternal City, in compliance with my mother's anxious desire, as well as that the great change of scene a journey there would bring, might, to some extent, afford relief from the heavy grief, bordering on despondency, which had affected me, since her loss seemed to fill the cup of my affliction. Apart from what I had read of ancient Rome, and of the virtues and heroism of its time-honored rulers and people, I had an idea that most of what I should witness in what might be called the religious capital of the world, would be something powerfully illustrative of the beneficial effects of the spirit and influence of that which was claimed to be the True Faith; that the contrast I should be able to mark between what I had read and heard of Imperial Rome, and the modern Pontifical City, should be sufficient to convince the most skeptical, not only of the superiority of Christianity itself, but should lead to the acknowledgment that the faith inculcated by the Holy Father within the walls of Rome—in fact no other form of religion at the time was allowed to be publicly taught within the precincts of the city—was the only pure apostolic doctrine.

Indeed, notwithstanding all my previous misgivings, I had an impression that this superiority would be made manifest by what I should witness of the devotedness of the numerous clergy, the purity and simplicity of the lives of the inhabitants, and in the prevailing order and morality around. I had in a manner been led to expect this. The clergy, it is true, were conspicuous in every direction; it seemed to me that they formed a great portion of the population; but it soon struck me that any efforts made by them for the elevation of the common people were evidently worthless and ineffectual. Such a crowd of ecclesiastics! There were cardinals in state coaches, bishops with servants in livery, priests in soutaines, and with broad hats and shaven faces, and monks and friars of almost every degree, from *fratres majores* to *fratres minores*, roaming about as beggars. There they were as barefooted beggars, and bare-headed beggars, as beggars in black, beggars in white, and beggars in gray, Dominicans, Carmelites, Franciscans, and Augustinians, wandering here and there as mendicants among a population, the majority of which appeared to be in a state of, what might be called, contented pauperism. At a glance one might take the whole as being a miscellaneous mob mostly representing monkish and laical destitution.

In the look and gait of most of the clergy there was scarcely anything that was serious, and in the features of the listless people there was an expression of blank indifference. The contrast between affluence and poverty in Rome was, at least, as great as I had witnessed anywhere else, but it seemed to me that the greater wealth of the city was altogether in the hands of the higher order of ecclesiastics, who were the Croesus and Dives of sanctified palaces, and palatial churches, while the submissive crowd—the real beggars, the bravos, the lazzaroni—seemed to have no conception as to the cause of their poverty,

or to have the least inclination or ability to reason upon it. They appeared content with the privilege of entering rich sanctuaries, of bowing before shrines, and of prostrating themselves to receive the occasional blessing of the Holy Father. They looked as if satisfied with a life of indolence, content to sit or to mope about in the sunlight, to beg or to steal that which they ate ; to earn or secure a trifle even by a criminal act, and to spend part of this if necessary to gain absolution ; and then to retreat at night to a foul den in some dirty street near the Ghetto, or the Campus Martius.

This was my impression of the lower orders of Rome. Every day I had sufficient evidence to satisfy me that they were as ignorant, as degraded, and as immoral as any similar class of people in Europe. What could have been the cause of this ? Why was it that so few of these people could read or write ? An advertisement—there were few even of these—posted up on a wall must have been a printed mystery to old and young alike. What were the priests doing, those of every degree and in varied showy attire, seen in such numbers almost at any time, and nearly in every part of the city ? Were even one of them to stand, if but for an hour a day, with a slate and pencil, on the marble steps in front of some stately church, and exercise his clerical authority, he might within a week teach a thousand or more of his illiterate parishioners to read the dedication to Saint Somebody over the doorway, instead of leaving them merely able to bow and mumble some kind of prayer to the image of the saint himself.

But this was not done. No voice from either pulpit or altar had ever commanded the people to learn to read, as they had been commanded to conform to the rites of the Church, or to beware of apostacy ; and thus many have remained to this day unable to tell one letter of the alphabet from another.

What an example the mendicant orders have shown to the listless, passive subjects of His Holiness, who roam idly even in view of the Vatican. From infancy they had been taught to reverence the hooded, or girdled, or barefooted friars who wandered through the dirty narrow streets of the Eternal City, asking charity from those who needed food themselves. A stranger could readily perceive that the friars though in humble garb, were anything but humble in demeanor, and that they were evidently prepared to demand as a right the alms which superstitious fears alone urged many to give. The impoverished gave, but they followed the example shown them. Honest toil was despised, and the lives of thousands have been spent, as it were, in one long holiday of beggary. To be sure there are vast libraries in Rome, but who read the books? There are pictures, and museums, but these are seldom seen or visited by any but tourists and strangers. Even the monuments and remains of pagan greatness that still make Rome far more attractive to the intellectual world than St. Peter's, or the palace of the Vatican, are glanced at with unconcern. *Etruscan relics are scarcely noticed and elicit no inquiry. Neither the Pantheon, the Coliseum, the arches, or the deserted columns which stand out alone making their mute appeal, excite the least curiosity; they have no symbolism for the degenerate population, and they awake no feeling of veneration whatever in breasts that know nothing of such a sentiment.

In another manner I felt disappointment. So far from Rome being a clean and orderly city, I found most of the streets, particularly those narrow ways in certain quarters, excessively filthy. There were long ranges of dingy walls in nearly every direction, and the interior of many of the houses exhibited anything but extra cleanliness. In fact so far from the city being what I had expected to find it I was convinced that it

was, in many respects, one of the most unclean and, I must say, dissolute places on the face of the earth. I will not say that, in proportion to the population, it was worse than London or Paris, but for the metropolis of Christendom, it certainly was no better; even making every allowance it was in many ways far behind what I had expected to find it.*

I had not yet visited any of the churches, I felt more desirous of first looking at the great historical remains of the past, and from what I witnessed of these I was led to increase my feelings of wonder and admiration for the lofty conceptions, the heroism, and the superior virtues of the pagan predecessors of those now here under ecclesiastical rule. However, I was soon to have an opportunity of attending among the worshippers of the modern established faith of the Imperial City, and to contrast the pompous ceremonies of the papal ritual with what I had learned of the more simple religious celebrations, which took place in less showy temples, long previous to the alleged missionary visit of the Prince of the Apostles.

It was Holy Week in Rome. It was Holy Thursday, the middle of the penitential week, and thousands from all countries—for whom at this particular time there was but meagre accommodation—entered the city to witness the recurrence of the annual display. This word may not be inappropriate, for though there is an attempt at an external show of mourning—the Pope and Cardinals wearing a kind of purple instead of scarlet—and things on the whole being made to wear an unusual sombre appearance, yet places of amusement were only partially closed; but were the museums and picture galleries and theatres to remain open, few would care to enter, the grand

* We are informed that the present condition of Rome is much better. After the accession of the late Victor Emanuel things in the city were greatly improved.

ous fête would be the paramount attraction for all, more especially for foreigners. The Pope was to appear enthroned in a princely array, and would bless the people. My dear mother enjoined me never to rest until I had received the pontifical benediction; for no matter how tempted I might ever be to desist, this, she had assured me, would secure my adherence to the Church, and confirm me in the true apostolic faith.

Very early that morning. The sun shone brilliantly on all, and this was accepted by hundreds of believers, who were already astir, as an evidence that the Virgin would lend her celestial aid to give additional splendor to the pious ostentation of the day. As the grand services would not commence for some time, I had two or three hours to visit the great and the most immense and wonderful structure of the Christianendom. Upon entering St. Peter's my feelings were almost indescribable. Apart from a sensation of awe which I was inspired while standing beneath the exalted dome of the vast edifice, I could but with difficulty get rid of the thought that I was not translated to some marvellous region beyond the confines of earth. One of the altars was ablaze with lights, and it seemed as if all the gold and silver and precious stones in the world had been flung down upon it, and were piled profusely around in the most exquisite chance arrangement. Pendant near by were silken hangings of rainbow hues. Embroidered tapestry was spread out in shining folds. Gold, trimmed with brilliants, was intertwined among embroidery and lace work of the rarest fineness and all in front in beautiful screens, to add softness to the scene, and the whole was arched and surrounded with clouds of festoons, wreaths, and garlands, of the most extraordinary richness and elegance.

The other altars looked to have been denuded, and the great crowd of worshippers, who had assembled around the gorgeous display, appeared to be almost overwhelmed with emotion. Many, like myself, were, however, mere gazers who had at first been struck with astonishment. The glare was so great that the eye could not, as it were, turn aside or refuse to see, and it was with difficulty that a strange emotional feeling, scarcely understood, could be suppressed. But after having looked steadily for some minutes at what had been deliberately collected and artistically arranged for exhibition, and exercising a moderate control over purely animal impulses, that which at first appeared so dazzling and attractive, gradually degenerated into mere tinsel, into a tawdry and gaudy show, calculated to deceive and lead the unwary to the actual worship of symbols, instead of engendering a true regard for the piety or virtues which they were said, or intended, to represent.

A vast majority of mankind, in some peculiar way, shape, or direction, are but symbol worshippers. Many a noble principle is dead and buried, and forever hidden from the multitude that are clamorous to reverence even its grave clothes. It seemed to be so here in my presence. It struck me, from what I could discern, that perhaps not one in a hundred of the bowing or almost prostrate supplicants, felt anything more of that which might be defined as true religion, than mere emotion; and unguarded emotion has developed what is commonly called religion in so many "questionable shapes," that to the great bulk of mankind it has been anything but a restraint or a blessing.

Having heard much of what was to be seen within the walls of St. Peter's, I employed my time to the best advantage in order to be able to give due attention to the great ceremonies of the day. Mr. Callaghan, my old tutor, having told me more

of the peculiar doings of the Church of Rome than I had ever heard from any one else, I was in one way desirous of testing the correctness of his information. I had been told that many of the rites and ceremonies of paganism had been incorporated into the Catholic Church, and that certain images of the gods of the Pantheon had been taken therefrom and turned into Romish saints, and that the statue of Jupiter, originally erected in the Capitol, had been removed to St. Peter's, pontifically blessed and baptized, to represent St. Peter himself. I had not long to look for what I sought. In one particular place I saw a number of persons crossing themselves and bowing before a great statue, and verily kissing its naked foot. This, it is said, was the original pagan statue of Jupiter, first worshipped in his temple on the *Mons Capitolinus*. Some, however, have stated that it is only a recast from the bronze of the image of the principal pagan deity. Be this as it may, here it was now to be seen erected in the great Christian temple for the veneration of believers, and, unless I was greatly mistaken by appearances, the veneration of many on that occasion was carried almost to the very verge of idolatry.

A short time after ten o'clock in the forenoon, a great multitude was assembled in front of St. Peter's. The military were drawn up in formidable lines, and the stately carriages of Cardinals and high ecclesiastical authorities followed one another as they rolled towards the church, while people of every nation stood waiting for the arrival of His Holiness. Every eye is strained to catch a first glimpse of the "king of all earthly potentates." He comes at last, escorted from the Sistine Chapel to that of the Pontine, where he is robed in scarlet lavishly ornamented with gold, and a golden mitre placed upon his head. He is borne in a red sedan chair on the shoulders of four ecclesiastics to a certain place near the grand

balcony. Soon after this he appears again magnificently dressed in white satin. He also wears a crimson cape, and, with fans of peacock feathers waving on either side, he is carried out in his chair upon the balcony, which has an awning of white cloth, and a carpet of crimson velvet. The spectacle so far was one of unusual magnificence, and, no doubt, many among the thousands who bowed so humbly to the representative of St. Peter, felt that were they even to pay adoration to him who was so exalted above all, they would scarcely be guilty of an impious homage by regarding him, who was acknowledged by the Church to be the Vicar of Christ, as being something superlatively more than mere sinful man.

In the unusual silence which prevailed, a Cardinal who stood near the Pope read certain "indulgences" for the year, granted by His Holiness. The Bull in *Cæna Domini* anathematizing heretics, schismatics—including, of course, apostates—had its annual repetition, and was listened to with evident attention by those who were near enough to hear the words of the malediction. The reading of other ecclesiastical documents and instructions followed, and at the close there was a short pause; a great bell tolled aloud; all, old and young, of every rank, station and degree, bent down low, and the Holy Father stretched forth his hand, and, with a wave or two of his forefingers, gave us the papal benediction.

Before I had time to raise my head—for I had instinctively bowed down with the rest—the guns of the castle of St. Angelo thundered out their applause. The great bell of St. Peter's rang out and was accompanied in its acclamation by every other bell in the city. The military saluted by presenting arms, the regimental bands burst out into harmony. The loud strains are echoed forth by the shouts and hosannas of the people, and the first grand part of the day's ceremonies is over.

There were, however, to be other pious pageants. His Holiness was borne away to wash the feet of thirteen poor men—chosen monks drilled and instructed for the occasion—and afterwards to hand them soup and wine, and wait upon them at table. The formality at this ceremonial, and the pious example of humility thereby inculcated must be familiar to many. I did not rush forward with others to try and gain an entrance to the transept near St. Peter's tomb. The place was already crowded, and I had for an hour or longer suffered too much from the jam and pressure outside to care for seeing any more than I had now witnessed. I was satisfied. I had complied with my mother's request, and, unlike the majority present, I felt no further inclination to run the risk of being crushed to death.

It was something of a struggle to get free from the immense number who were trying to make their way towards the nearset highways. Packed as we almost were, I was occasionally nearly lifted from the ground by the swaying and crushing of the multitude. In endeavoring to elbow myself along, I felt a tug at my pocket, and as soon as I could manage to get one of my hands at liberty I missed my silk handkerchief. Some smart thief, who of course must have been among the number blessed by the Pope, had already added that to his stock of plunder, and fixed as I was it would be useless to try and recover the property. Redoubling my efforts I had got as far as the end of one of the colonnades, when I observed an elderly gentleman in front of me make a sudden attempt to grab a man who had most adroitly managed to make his escape. The gentleman had lost his watch. It had just been twitched from him by some Roman expert in the garb of a friar, who could still be seen doubling here and there in order to get away. He evidently had not much difficulty in doing this, as no one appeared to

interfere with him. A hurried appeal in a strange mixture of English, French and Italian, was made for assistance, but the gentleman was only laughed at by most of those he addressed. It was a lusty Irish voice. I drew nearer with a feeling of sympathy. What! Did my eyes deceive me? Did my senses betray me? I made a desperate rush. I grasped his hand and looked up in the honest but now excited face of my father's late partner; in the face I had long been anxious to see again, that of Jane's father, Mr. Daniel Casey, a principal member of the once respected firm of Fairband and Casey.





CHAPTER XXXVII.

FAITH AND WORKS.

“I WOULD lose a hundred watches rather than not meet you John ; yes, a thousand of them. The rascal that has just ran off with mine is now quite welcome to it. Goodness ! If you had not spoken I should have never known you. Quite a full grown man already. Bless me, how we all change !”

He still held my hand firmly in his, looking all the time earnestly in my face, while his was now glowing with kindness, and as round and ruddy as ever. Though a long time had past since I had last seen him, he was but little changed ; perhaps a little more stooped, yet still erect and rugged enough to give the thief, if he had caught him, a very rough handling.

“How lucky I have been to meet you ! We have spoken of you so often, not dreaming that you were within a thousand miles of us, and now, good Lord ! to find you here so unexpectedly.”

The “*we*” and the “*us*” darted through my ear with a strange thrilling effect, but I made an effort at composure, and assured him that the encounter was the most happy and fortunate event of my life.

“To be sure it is, to be sure it is, man, for all of us,” said he hurriedly. “Why, here we have been, on and off, more than a week waiting for the celebration—and wasn’t it a grand, a

really grand one, John?—aye, waiting until we got tired of this wretched old city, its dirty narrow streets, and its population of thieves, and beggars, and half-heathens. Who would ever expect to come across them here? 'Pon my soul 'twould take half a dozen popes to Christianize the rascally gangs that follow one about praying for you, and cursing you, in their vile gibberish, all in the same breath. We must get out of this villainous country as soon as we can—indeed we must."

Here he checked himself a little. I scarcely expected that he was capable of anything like undue excitement, and his wonted quiet manner was soon almost restored.

"Tell me all the news, John, tell me. Where have you been? How long have you been here? Where are you going to? Come, tell me," said he, pulling me closer to him. "But, oh, what sad news! You needn't tell me—very, very sad indeed. We heard it all—your father's loss on the Bristol packet; your aunt's, too; and, O, John, your dear good mother's death in the old house at Cove—God be merciful to her soul! Well, well, poor fellow," continued he after a moment's pause, and grasping my hand again, "You have had your share of trouble already, and when we heard of it, sure Jane herself wept and cried as if she had lost me and every one else belonging to her."

Here in spite of every restraint the tears started from my eyes, and for want of my handkerchief, they streamed down my cheeks; and when Mr. Casey saw this his eyes filled also.

"Come, man," said he, drawing me aside to one of the outer pillars of the colonnade, under which we had yet been standing, "Come, we must say no more about this now; 'tis a sad subject, John, and as we shall have a great deal to say together, let us talk of something else. Sorrow will come of its own accord; it will come to the surface of things in the sunshine as well as in the shade, do what we can. I want to have a quiet

chat with you, so let us get free of the crowd and find some place where we can, if possible, sit for an hour without interruption even from a beggar."

In a few minutes we managed to get clear of the throng, and we went still further until we got to a rather unfrequented place which was considerably elevated. We could see the muddy Tiber at some distance below us, and, opposite, we could see the Pincian and the Quirinal hills which were almost covered with churches, convents, villas, and many large buildings. Seated in a shaded spot close to an ancient fountain, we were tolerably secure from interruption, and here Mr. Casey resumed the conversation, and in the kindest manner reverted to old times at home. He mentioned with what deep regret it was that he had felt himself obliged to dissolve partnership with my father, and told me of the sorrowful feelings with which he had heard of his sad fate. Of my mother he spoke in the most exalted terms; and his kind inquiries concerning my brother and sister convinced me that our family never had a more genuine and disinterested friend. We then alluded to his reasons for leaving Ireland. His daughter's health had been failing for some time, and her physician had recommended a short sea voyage and a period of interesting travel on the continent. Though she had expressed a desire to visit England, she had somehow been indifferent about going to more distant countries. Still, as Mr. Casey had felt like travelling, and having ample means at his disposal, and few demands to meet, he thought that he might venture to see a little more of the world, and that money could not be better spent, especially as it would likely be of advantage in many ways to her who was now his chief if not almost his only care.

Strange that all along, even up to the moment he had ended his recital, I found it next to impossible to make the least

inquiry concerning his daughter, who had been one of my earliest juvenile playmates and companions; one who had lent such happiness to my younger days; the little Jane who had been in my remembrance almost every day, I might say, during the long years which I had spent at Bristol in separation from those I had held most dear. When I tried to mention her name or make the least allusion to her I was, in a manner, tongue-tied, and could not speak, and my difficulty in this respect was greatly increased the moment I thought of what Shawn had told me in relation to the rumors of her engagement or marriage. The bare idea of her being united even to a Monarch would at the time have made me extremely unhappy. An obtruding notion of the kind made me miserable as it was, because I imagined that unless she had been married, and was in the society of her husband, she would most certainly have been out with her father to witness the day's religious celebrations.

After an unpleasant pause, during which I tried to say something, but in reality could find nothing to say in consequence of the preoccupation of my mind on one absorbing matter, in an effort of sheer desperation I at last made a hurried inquiry—"I hope Miss—Miss Casey is now quite well?"

The words seemed to fly out from my lips as if the sudden vent to the overcharge of my heart had sped them quickly beyond the range of hearing.

But Mr. Casey heard me. He turned in a moment with a look of surprise and nearly echoed me by saying, "*You hope Miss Casey is well.*"

He emphasized the patronymic with a stress sufficient to send a chill to my very heart.

"Miss Casey, indeed!" continued he. "Why John, I must only suppose that you can have never heard her name or else you would not have forgotten it so readily."

This was a blow under which I feared I should have quickly to succumb. This was the knell of my lingering hopes, for was there not here an indirect acknowledgment that she was another's, and lost to me forever? It was therefore with the greatest difficulty I could keep from betraying my emotion before her father.

"You must pardon me," I replied, trying to affect equanimity. "Though I had heard something of it, I really was not certain that Miss—at least that—that she was married."

"Married!" exclaimed he, glancing at me with astonishment. "Married! Goodness gracious, what put that in your head? She's not married, John. She will never marry, you may rely on that. There is not a man on earth that she will give her hand to. She has told me that more than twenty times, and I believe she means what she says. Of course I don't pretend to know the reason; the why, or the wherefore, she keeps to herself. You should call her *Jane*, her own simple name, as of old; that's what I meant when I found you speak so formally of your once little friend and companion."

Friend and companion! Ah, thought I, with a sudden impulse, those dear terms of association can never find a true echo on the bleak desert of celibacy.

"She will never change her name," continued Mr. Casey. "She would rather be buried alive with those holy nuns over there than wed the finest man, were he a prince, a Bomba, or even the Pope himself."

When saying this he pointed towards the convent of *Le Sepolte Vive*, which could be seen in the distance. It may not be known or believed by many, that those who enter this sad religious retreat of *Le Sepolte Vive* and take the terrible vow, put on a veil, or what might more properly be called a facial shroud, over their heads, which is never removed in the pres-

ence of another during life. These nuns are never permitted to go outside the high gloomy walls of the convent, and from the severe kind of unnatural life borne in this pious prison, the recluses confined therein are called, "The Buried Alive Nuns."

Mr. Casey's information as to his daughter's determination, though a relief in one sense, was the cause of great discouragement in another. It was a most unexpected revelation ; and from my being naturally often inclined to attribute the adverse result of past actions to perverse motives, or suspicious circumstances, and, where the least cloud appeared in view, to indulge in rather gloomy anticipations as to the future, I imagined that there was some mysterious circumstance connected with Jane's history, since we had been separated, that I could not unravel. I had heard that much attention had been paid her by some foreign admirer, and of course I was only too ready to weave an intricate web in connection with the past, and to imagine that some soulless trifler had perhaps made himself master of her heart, and was now dallying with her affections. To satisfy Mr. Casey I had, however, to try and give him the best explanation I could as to my reason for supposing that Jane had been married.

"It is nothing but an idle story," said Mr. Casey, after he had heard me ; "nothing in the world, John, but that. She would have been out with me to-day only that she hates being in a crowd. She had, anyway, a bad headache, and would not leave the house, and risk getting crushed, as I know I was at times, even to get the benefit of the Pope's blessing. She has already seen His Holiness, and may have an opportunity of seeing him again. As to her having a foreign admirer, I know of none. We got acquainted with a very nice gentleman at Paris—a Monsieur Valetti—who, he informs me, is the son of a merchant with whom we formerly had some dealings. He is

an educated young man, travels a good deal, and will soon speak English almost as well as he does French or Italian. He has so far paid Jane no greater attention than I think he has paid myself. We stopped at the same hotel, and he, having much leisure, often accompanied us in our walks and to such operas and theatres as we visited. In such a place as Paris one is almost sure to meet with some acquaintance from home, and it quite probable that M. Valetti was seen with us, and no doubt such a story as you heard could easily be manufactured. Indeed, I will not say but that his regard for Jane might have increased had she given him the least encouragement, but she having, as I told you, decided to live a life of single blessedness, she merely treated him as a pleasant acquaintance—one who was my friend—nothing further. He is to be here to-morrow or next day. He is a Catholic and would of course have been here to-day were it not for some previous engagement. We have been moving about from place to place and have not seen him for almost six weeks, but he corresponds with me pretty regularly and I had a letter last week proposing to accompany us from this city to Florence. Now what is there in this? You shall come and see us, however, and then you can judge for yourself. But what am I saying! You must leave where you are, and come straight home with me now. Won't I give somebody a surprise?"

I begged rather earnestly that Mr. Casey should excuse me. I told him that it would afford me the greatest happiness to call on them and renew my acquaintance with such kind friends. But as I must first return to my lodgings, I hoped he would allow me to defer the pleasure of my visit until evening. Secretly delighted as I was at the thought of meeting Jane, yet some strange feeling made me desirous to postpone the interview.

"Well, then," replied Mr. Casey, after a moment's consideration, "be it so; I know you won't disappoint us. And I tell you," said he, lowering his voice to a kind of confidential whisper, "I'll not say a word to her of having met you. I'll manage to make her believe that it is Valetti who is coming. You are about his height. His hair is darker than yours. His moustache is black while your whiskers are brown, but in the dusk of evening she may not know the difference for a minute or two—in fact she may not know you at all, you have changed and improved so much since you left home long ago. Any way, it will be a surprise—a pleasing one, I'm sure; and then, after we have had a chat about old times, as it will be fine moonlight—we shall take a walk through the Corso and see something of the better class of modern Romans."

We had scarcely ended our discourse when we observed a friar, or a person in a friar's garb, approach and kneel in front of a little statue of the Madonna and Child set in a niche in an old wall. Such statues can be seen in many places around Rome, and in many other parts throughout Italy and France. The man evidently did not see us, partly hidden as we were by a large tree which stood in front between us, and, after he had knelt and crossed himself, he bowed repeatedly to the image, and his devotions appeared to be made with the greatest sincerity.

"That's very like the rascal that took my watch," said Mr. Casey in a whisper, "but there are so many of the kind around here that you can scarcely tell one from the other."

I remarked that that man, any way, would be the last I should suspect.

"I'd suspect a religious man now," continued Mr. Casey, "just as quick as I would any one else. I have known some that would fast, and pray, and conform to prescribed church duties with the most scrupulous obedience, who were certainly the

most unreliable and dishonest men possible to meet. In business transactions your father and I had some costly experience in our dealings with a few of that kind. I have known some who would think it a mortal sin not to hear mass on a Sunday, or to eat a bit of meat on a Friday, and yet who could be rogues and liars of the meanest kind. Religion! Pshaw. With too many 'tis like, in a manner, to a fine black polish on old boots; it makes them look respectable at a distance—a nearer approach proves the deception."

While the friar was deeply engaged at his devotions, we noticed two or three men in the police uniform of the city cautiously approaching. They were followed a short distance behind by about half-a-dozen soldiers. They all appeared eager to get, unnoticed, nearer to the praying sinner. As they drew closer he must have heard their steps, for he glanced quickly around in alarm, and sprung from his knees in a moment. He promptly drew a pistol from his breast, fired it directly at his pursuers, and bounded away in an opposite direction from where we were. They shouted after him at once, but as he paid no attention to them, and only increased his speed, the soldiers received a hurried order, they instantly drew up and fired a volley, and we saw the friar fall.

When the men reached him, he made a desperate attempt to stab one of the officers with a stiletto, and it was with difficulty that the soldiers, one of whom had just been slightly wounded, could be prevented from running the prostrate wretch through with their bayonets. His leg had been broken, and, while cursing his captors, he was disarmed and bound, placed some-way across the soldiers' muskets, and borne off to prison.

This was a most startling occurrence which we so unexpectedly witnessed. We were equally astonished at the suddenness of the whole affair. We fortunately remained unobserved.

Had we been seen, we might have been required as witnesses, and perhaps be subjected to delay and inconvenience.

We subsequently heard something of the history of the pretended friar. He was the chief of a vile banditti who had infested the neighbourhood of certain lonely highways among the mountains some miles distant, and, strange as it may appear, he was reported to be very religious. Time after time rewards had been offered for the apprehension of these lawless men managed to visit the city in various disguises, it was surmised that they would not miss the greatest opportunity of the year in order to obtain the Pope's coveted blessing, and to plunder a little from curious sight-seeing strangers—merely, perhaps, to pay expenses. It was suspected that during Holy Week the pious robbers would flock, like others, to St. Peter's, to do penance, and to invoke certain favorite saints for further aid and protection. A strict look-out had, therefore, been kept, resulting, as we had seen, in the capture of the principal offender. Following the arrest, there was something of a lucky discovery. Among the things found in the possession of the noted freebooter was Mr. Casey's old favorite time-piece, which was duly delivered to him after having given the necessary satisfactory proofs of ownership.

Upon hearing this account, it brought to my remembrance something which I had read in a newspaper a few months before that, relating to the seizure and violent death of another Italian bandit, who had given the most undoubted proof of his religious yearnings, and his veneration for sacred things.*

* The London *Weekly Dispatch* of October 30th, 1870, gave an account of the capture and death of Antonio Cozzoleno, otherwise known as Pilone, who was killed near Naples, October 14th, 1870. He was a Neapolitan brigand, and was

I parted with Mr. Casey at the corner of one of the principal streets. I had his address safe in my pocket, and he made me renew my assurance that I would call on them at the appointed hour. As I paced leisurely on alone, my feelings were of the most peculiar kind, and my mind burdened with doubts. Who was Valetti? Why did he seek such intercourse with Mr. Casey and his daughter? Why come all the way to meet them here, and make an arrangement to accompany them to other places? I was troubled about this, indeed, I might say, agitated; for in spite of all Mr. Casey had said as to Jane's supposed indifference, I could not get rid of the idea that she must have given Valetti some encouragement, otherwise he would not affect so great an inclination for the bare society of her father. An attempt to construe his conduct in any other way would, I considered, be an absurdity.

My thoughts for the time were, however, soon turned in another direction, for when I got to my lodgings, I discovered to my great regret that, besides my handkerchief, I had lost a sacred relic which I had taken from the hand of my dead mother. This treasured memento had also, no doubt, been stolen from me—the old portrait of my Aunt Mary.

very pious. On his body were found verses in Italian to the Saviour, and an amulet with the image of St. Ciro round his neck. In his pocket was found a brass *reliquaire* containing fragments of the bones of Santa Francesca, San Colombo, San Giattino, and a bit of the Holy Virgin's veil; and among other pious articles, figures, and images of saints, was the Sacred Host wrapped in paper. This brigand committed many murders, set fire to houses, and, as the leader of a terrible gang of ruffians, robbed all he could.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN THE CLOUDS AGAIN.

IT was nearly sunset before I was ready to leave to go to Mr. Casey's. Not that I had many preparations to make, for I felt no inclination to study appearances in order that I might the more favourably impress one who I was almost convinced had been using her womanly arts to bring another under her subjection. No, the more I thought of the matter the more heartless I wished to believe her, and though I was at first desirous to meet the little Jane of my youth once more, yet that desire had now degenerated into complete indifference, and I believe were it not for the promise I had made, and out of my high regard for Mr. Casey, I should have left the city without having put myself to the least inconvenience, or even to walk fifty yards to see his daughter.

I remembered the old fits of jealousy I used to have concerning my brother, but it was not jealousy now, it was more like contempt. Reluctant, however, as I was to pay this particular visit, I at last took my way in the direction of Mr. Casey's stopping place, and went leisurely along with an unassumed careless air that really surprised me—just to think of my going to see Jane under the influence of such feelings!

As I had not far to go, and not wishing to be in a hurry, I turned into a kind of *albergo* or restaurant; it did not look like

a fashionable place of resort ; it was the first I chanced to find, and while I sat sipping a lemonade I heard persons in an adjoining box or apartment playing at some kind of game. The character of the place at once occurred to me—it must be a gambling house. I was preparing to go away when a few English words in a foreign accent were spoken loud enough for me to hear. “Yes, that is it. *Oui, il est vrai*, dis ist Monsieur Valetti, an she is Ma’mselle Kaisee, Kaisee, ay, that is it, an iv he have goot care he vill get all, *oui, tout*, all her monee.” Another then said in French, “*Ces femmes là sont très capricieuses.*” The other then replied, “Ah, she ony pretend, that is it, she will have him and give him de money—d’argent, jes wait.” There was a titter, and after this the words were spoken so low that I failed to connect them so as to make out the meaning. It was evident that the persons were not Italians. but whoever they were, they preferred speaking imperfect English to good French, in order, perhaps, that they might not be so likely to be understood by a Roman eavesdropper. As it was I should not have paid them much attention were it not that I had heard the name, Valetti, repeated during the conversation. They had probably been in the house with others for some time, and were now about to leave. I stood aside and watched them as they passed out. There were three, two of whom I was greatly surprised to recognise. Only a few days previously I chanced to be a fellow traveller with them from Dieppe to Paris. One of them was at that time in the character of a young French priest, the other passed, I think, as his brother, and I noticed that presuming on their real or assumed respectability, they had made themselves very agreeable to two young ladies who happened to be in the company. Here, however, they were now again, the quondam priest, wearing a false mustache and in appearance a stylish full blown

man of the world ; his companion the same. The third person was a large, stout, overdressed man, whose dark features were by no means prepossessing, and whose general appearance stamped him, at least in my opinion, as being one who would not be over scrupulous as to the measures he adopted to obtain that of which he stood in need. As it happened they took the direction I was to go. I followed, and it was but a few minutes until we reached the house I had to enter. There my curiosity became much increased when I saw two of them stand at an opposite corner of the street and leisurely look up at the windows of the *taverna*, as if they wished to see who were their occupants, or expected a token of recognition from some person within.

Just as I entered Mr. Casey took my hand. "Ah, I knew you would come," said he, "but here in my impatience I have been waiting for you nearly half-an-hour. I have already told Jane that an old friend was coming to see us. Of course she thinks it's Valletti. Whom else could she expect? Let us go up stairs, it is now getting nearly dusk enough to keep her from recognising you, or him, or any other person."

When we got up to the first landing, a parlor door was open, and, at an opposite window a lady stood looking out. The light was yet sufficiently clear to enable me to see the outlines of her form, which appeared to be graceful to a marked degree.

"That's she," whispered Mr. Casey; "you just stay here and I'll tell her our friend is come." At that moment a servant handed him a letter. Thinking it might be of some importance, he asked me to excuse him while he read it. To do this he went to a lamp which had just been lit at the end of a hall. I remained where I was, and, during his stay, of course my eyes were not for a moment removed from the object that had so

long been of such interest to me. She stood like a statue, looking rather upwards, but as there was not the least movement of the head, one might fancy that she was in deep thought, watching the fading red light which could still be seen lingering upon the distant hills. My first feeling now was one of pity. Was she thinking of him whose arts had, no doubt, succeeded in blotting me so completely out of her memory? Was she anxiously awaiting his arrival? Ah me, what a change of circumstances! She slowly altered her position, and now her side face was towards me. In the dim light I could notice what seemed to be its pensive expression, a shade of sadness having also overspread the really attractive features. They were Jane's, for I could detect in the more womanly lineaments the lines of the young countenance which would likely be indelible in my mind forever. As she at present appeared before me, her eyes were thoughtfully downcast, and, holding a book, her hands were crossed upon her breast.

"It was from Valetti," whispered Mr. Casey joining me again, "He will be here to-morrow evening—but let us go in."

She turned towards us when she heard our approach. "Here he is at last, pretty close, however, to the time he promised." Having said this Mr. Casey took my hand and led me towards her. I bowed, but, as she took no step forward to meet me, I stood and instinctively held out my hand. She advanced a little and merely touched mine with her fingers. Just as she was about to speak she looked into my face for a moment, and turning to her father said: "This is not the friend you expected."

"Oh, not exactly the same one," replied Mr. Casey, "but another, may be just as good, even an older friend than Monsieur Valetti."

She ventured to look at me again, but in the dimness of the

room she was evidently at a loss—it was plain that she did not recognise me, and, so far, I kept from speaking.

“Can’t you make a guess,” said Mr. Casey a few moments—
“Guess his name.”

“I really cannot, pa,” she replied in a hesitating manner. She appeared to be somewhat disconcerted, and while she still looked up at my face, I turned it a little aside from the window so that it might become more shaded.

“Why, don’t you know William Fairband?” at last asked Mr. Casey.

She gave a little start—“Why surely,” inquired she eagerly, “not *John’s* brother?” She seized my hand, her reserved manner gave way to one of earnestness, and she drew me slowly nearer to the window as if to make herself satisfied regarding the identity of my brother. A moment’s scrutiny convinced her that I was some other person, and while she held my hand still in doubt, her father spoke out in a vigorous manner: “Well, then if it is not William Fairband may be its John himself.” Still looking at me she continued to hold my hand—pressed it more firmly, let it go—and then slowly seated herself in the chair by her side.

“That’s a surprise I had in store for you,” said her father, “but I see it was rather too much and too unexpected. Look,” continued he, drawing my attention to her, “She has got one of those attacks of giddiness again, and it will take a minute or so for her to get over it.”

Jane was still seated, but she had placed her hands over her face, and her head was bent and resting on the window sill.

I must say that in spite of the mistrust which I had almost fostered against Miss Casey, I could not help feeling touched by this evidence of what might perhaps be a lingering regard either for my brother or myself. Of course I was not particu-

larly elated to think that she could bear him in affectionate remembrance and look upon me only as his brother John. She had seen him many times after I had left Ireland, but when I heard her refer to him as "John's brother," there was something in these two words which made a certain chord vibrate, giving me a moment of ecstasy. It was, however, only for a moment. I relapsed again into my old doubting mood—she thinks more of him than she does of me—she is disappointed that I should be here instead of William, whom she would have been better pleased to have recognized, or—this is just it—she feels annoyed that I am here, and perplexed to think that I shall most probably be present when Valetti, a more favored person, makes his appearance, and that I shall then discover her heartlessness.

Under this impression my pride of spirit returned, and assuming a most formal air, I said, "Though I am really glad to see you again, Miss Casey, I sincerely hope that my unexpected (I was on the point of saying, unwelcome) presence has not been the cause of your sudden indisposition."

"There's *Miss Casey* again for you," said her father, half displeased. "In the name of goodness, man, call her by her own name and leave Monsieur Valetti to all the missing."

Hurriedly as the words were spoken, they were followed by a sensation of pleasure, for it struck me immediately that Valetti after all could not be on very intimate terms with Jane if he had not got further yet than—"Miss Casey."

"Oh, you will, I am sure, excuse me," said Jane, addressing me in her old gentle manner; "there was something in the sound of your voice that I thought I knew, but you have grown and changed so much, and there is such a difference since I saw you last—and what a long time that has been—that I fear I should not have known you had I seen you anywhere else."

"Gracious me, isn't he changed, and you might have said so good-looking too," followed Mr. Casey.

"Possibly you might not have known me," said I, desirous of intercepting any further peculiar remarks from her father. "When I met Mr. Casey to-day I was overjoyed. He would have passed me unnoticed had I not spoken." I then gave a short account of our chance encounter, and of the mutual pleasure it afforded us to talk again of old times ; and that being here with them this evening would make the day long to be remembered as one of the happiest of my life. Jane listened with evident interest to my recital, and was then going to make some further remarks when Mr. Casey, holding out the letter he had received, said :

"By the bye, here is another pleasure in store for us. Monsieur Valetti writes that he will be here to-morrow evening, and I am so glad John that you will be here to make his acquaintance."

I scarcely know what reply I made to this, but I noticed with satisfaction that Jane did not appear exhilarated by the information, and then somewhat encouraged by her seeming indifference as to whether Valletti would make his visit the next day or the next month, I managed to turn the conversation in order to try and find out whether some particular incidents of our youthful days were still as fresh in her memory as they were in mine. How great was my satisfaction to discover that she had not forgotten a single circumstance that had added to our happiness during the blissful period of her stay with us at Cove.

"You may think it very strange," said she, "that before you came here this evening I was looking at a cloud picture in the sky similar to one which we saw long ago—You will remember it. I think it was on the very last evening that we walked out together. The next day, if I mistake not, I took

my leave of you all. Is it not singular that I should be thinking of that airy landscape the moment you entered this room. Oh yes, many a time have I beheld such cloud scenes since we have been in Italy, and this evening in particular, the one upon which my eyes rested when you came was nearly the same as that which we gazed at in the Irish sky."

Was not this a sufficient evidence that I must have had still a place in her memory? I could come to no other conclusion than that she was the same Jane, the same after years of separation. She was now a woman, as fair and as gentle in my eyes as when she had confided in me with all the simplicity of a girl. She had not grown to be tall, but was still neat and, I might say, exquisite in figure. Her hair was dark brown, her features chaste and regular, and her manner particularly kind and winning. The reserve which she had shown at first could now be scarcely noticed, and in her wonted way she sympathized with me on my heavy loss. She asked me a hundred questions about all at home, about my sister and William, about Bristol and my uncle, and how I had managed to spend my time away from my early friends, and so long among comparative strangers. Though we spoke quite freely, and rather with something approaching the old familiarity, yet there was between us a singular feeling of restraint. I had addressed her but once as Miss Casey; she had called me but once, Mr. Fairband; still, though this formal manner did not continue for any time, yet neither of us had so far ventured to pronounce "the once familiar name."

Mr Casey hardly said a word while we were speaking. He seemed to take pleasure in listening to what we had to say, and now that there was a pause in the conversation, he proposed that, as the night was fine, and the moonlight clear and beautiful, we should go out and enjoy a walk.

The Corso is one of the principal streets of Rome. It is long, and has many fine buildings on either side. At one end of this street is the Piazza del Popolo, near to which is a handsome area, where a fine obelisk has been erected. This is a favorite resort, and to-night a great number of persons could be seen promenading this select thoroughfare. Foreigners at this holy season were numerous in the city, and the costumes of different countries could easily be recognized. Every one appeared to be talking aloud, but, from the rapidity of utterance, the little I knew of French, and the still less of Italian, was not of the least service to me in the midst of such a Babel.

"Well," said Mr. Casey, after having, I presume, tried to give a patient hearing to the running discourse around him, "It's really amazing to me how they can understand one another. Such gabble and chatter I never heard before, and faith they might talk to me until doom's day and leave me no wiser."

Peculiar as Mr. Casey's observation was, a stranger would probably agree that there was some truth in it, for though I tried to catch a word or two on our way I had at last to give up the attempt in despair. As I walked once more by Jane's side in a happy vein of thought, and commenting humorously on the strange sights which we saw at every turn, I heard a few English words spoken, "Who are these?" and we were met by three persons who were walking arm-in-arm, and indulging in cigars. One of these quickly withdrew his arm and turned aside, while the other two stood and confronted us for a moment, and stared at me as if astonished. I knew them at a glance. They were the same that I had seen that evening leaving the Albergo, and why one of them should have left his companion so suddenly rather surprised me at the time.

We remained out for nearly two hours ; a period more happily spent than I had enjoyed for many a day. I accompanied my friends back to the hotel. I had to promise to be with them again early on the following day, and make arrangements to remain and accompany them on their further tour, and after Mr. Casey had given my hand a hearty shake, Jane gave mine a peculiar pressure that made my heart beat quicker, and leaving them with regret I went on my way glowing with hope in the future.

How could I sleep after this ?—Sleep ?—Impossible ! Nothing but the certainty of the most glorious dreams could have induced me to allow the delightful, animating feeling which now possessed me to be eclipsed by any shadow of slumber. I began to think that I was not altogether forgotten by Jane, that she still felt interested in me more than in Valetti, or any other living being, let him be English, Irish, French, or Roman, and that after what she had just told me, were it possible for her now to be a deceiver, she must be one of the most artful, dangerous, and heartless ones alive.

Almost relieved from every doubt, I felt no inclination to go to my lodgings, and as the night was still exceedingly fine, I went on alone, quite indifferent as to which course I took. I must have walked a long distance. It was not yet midnight, and hearing the sounds of a guitar, I went in the direction of the music. Somebody, I could perceive, was singing what I supposed was a love song, under a latticed window. Doubtless, some wandering Andalusian was paying his respects in this way to some Roman beauty. It was a retired place. Near by was part of one of the ruins of old Rome, and getting still closer, I stood behind a broken column, and, looking up at the moon, I listened to the voice which, at that quiet hour, was singularly clear and melodious. Verse after verse was sung, one song was

changed for another, but as the lattice remained closed, the serenader at last took his leave, and, on his way, passed along a pathway close to where I was standing. He did not observe me, the column being between us, but how great was my astonishment to discover that he was one of the three friends whom I had seen arm in arm on the Corso an hour or two previously.

While thinking over the strange chance meetings I had had with this particular individual that day—he also being the one who had turned aside when we met him and his companions on the Corso—I remained for some time longer, and at last considering it time to depart, I was about to step away from the pillar, when I saw a shadow approaching from an opposite direction. The moonlight now was almost as clear as day, and I had no fear whatever of any prowling robber or highwayman. I looked, and a person in clerical garb was approaching. His head was bent, and under the broad leaf of his hat his gray hair was hanging down behind. So absorbed did he appear, that he passed on without raising his head or noticing me, and went on a short distance farther to a place in the ruin where a small marble statue of some female saint had been set up. Here he knelt, reminding me strongly of the friar we had seen in a similar posture that day. Curious to know whether I should witness another adventure, I listened to his prayer, the words of which were as yet scarcely audible. He must have known that he could now make his appeal at this particular place undisturbed, and that while the great thoroughfares of the city might remain thronged, remote spots like this would be almost deserted. But hark! It was not a prayer, his words were not in the Latin of the Church, they were arranged in no formal manner, but to my surprise, he spoke in English, and with sorrowful voice called upon “Mary in heaven.” He pleaded with his “own lost Mary” to come to him, if even

but once, ere he departed. In anguish he appeared to await some answering voice from on high, and when no comforting reply was borne back on the night air, he looked like one in a state of despair. Uncovered as he was before the image, his gray hair added to his sad appearance. He called upon Mary "for the last time," he sobbed aloud, and was evidently in great mental distress. Under an impulse of pity I approached him, and when he raised his head, I saw once more the now pale and worn features of Father Ambrose, of him who had been my midnight phantom—the spectre priest of the Big room.





CHAPTER XXXIX.

THAT FACE AGAIN.

FOR nearly a minute I was unable to move from the spot. The poor man seized my hand without looking up, as if he were really uncertain whether I was a messenger from his Mary in heaven, or one from some brotherhood sent to conduct him perhaps to a monastery. I did not fear him now. He was so changed, worn and sad, that pity predominated over every other feeling.

"Do take me there," said he in a low trembling voice. "Take me, I cannot go myself—take me. Oh, I am so tired of life—and still, I dread it—I dread it."

"Dread what, Father Ambrose, what do you dread?"

He was silent a moment before he replied—"The river."

He is insane, or nearly so. What shall I do? I must not leave him here. This was my first impression. He was nervous and was bent nearly prostrate; and I looked around to see if any person was near, so as to ask assistance if needed. "Father Ambrose, look up, and see if you know me." I tried to raise him gently, but he appeared to cling to the earth as if he wished it to open and bury him out of sight for ever. I let him remain this way for a little time. I called to him again. He slowly drew himself up, and looking at me rather wildly, said—"You speak English—you know my name—where am

"I?" He grasped both my hands like one in despair, and spoke first in French—"Vous êtes un véritable ami! Take me there, take me there, I am so tired of life; and all will be over soon."

He did not know me, but he became quite passive, and allowed me to lead him away. I saw it would not do to leave him alone, for it flashed upon my mind that he must be bent upon self-destruction, and I was confirmed in this opinion when I heard him mutter as we went along—"I want to die now, for I am deserted by her and by heaven—alas, alas, deserted by all!"

Judging that he was at present in an unsound state of mind, and seeing that he was plainly rather feeble in health, I determined to take him with me, and, holding his hand as I would that of a child, we walked on slowly without speaking until we came to a bridge which crossed the Tiber. "Ah," said he, suddenly, "here is the place."

He tried to release his hand, but I held it firmly. Then he bent over the parapet, looking down with gloomy wistfulness at the inviting sheen of the moonlit water, and said—"That river covers many a lost treasure, many an evil deed, and many a woful secret; let me bury another there with those of the past."

"Father Ambrose," said I to him resolutely, "you must come with me. I shall not leave you to-night; let us go on, for it is late, and to-morrow you will think of something better."

"Who are you," asked he, stopping a moment to look at my face.

"Do you not know me yet, Father Ambrose? I am a friend, I shall tell you my name again," and I spoke it close to his ear.

He appeared lost in thought for nearly a minute, and then repeated slowly, "John Fairband—John Fairband—you know me then, do you?"

He now stood as if desirous of tracing my features, and comparing them perhaps with some face still even maybe but faint in his troubled memory.

"Young man—child," said he at last in a tremulous voice, "I ought to know, but my poor brain is so confused. Wait, let me see. John Fairband—Fairband, of Cove. Can it be possible! Ah, I know all now—your poor mother was Mary's sister. O child! I little expected to see you here. If I had not met you—if I had not, I might have put an end to my sufferings. What these have been for years none can ever know. Alas, alas! what a long, dreary, melancholy life I have had to bear since she was forced away from me by the most fiendish acts ever designed by man. My poor wretched existence has been made one long, long continued sorrow. Oh! of what was I guilty to deserve such terrible punishment? My earthly happiness wrenched from me by demons in the garb of priests. See! it is the garb I wear, but I hate its looks. I have never worn it as a choice—it is a shroud—but, while wearing it, I have been no false adviser, no treacherous friend, and—and—no Jesuit."

The last word he whispered in my ear, as if afraid of being overheard.

"By designing men I have been placed in the Church—in my living tomb; and the priesthood, which may have been attractive to others, has been but a heavy burden to me through years of repining, and has done but little to cheer my prospect to the tomb. Its imposed duties never brought forgetfulness of my wrongs, brought no solace in my misfortune, no hope for my future; and when I wished to die to-night, it was only because I had some fond expectation that I should perhaps see her again, and be united to my lost angel in some happier sphere."

I tried to say a few soothing words, and he listened with a sorrowful air to what I said.

"Alas! alas!" replied he, "your words bring little comfort. Oh the desolation of a heart without hope! But there is one left, not of earth, but the hope, the prayerful hope, that there may be some reparation for me after I shall have left this vale of tears, and closed my eyes for ever; the dear fond hope that I may meet her again, never, never more to part. O, young man, perhaps you love! Think what it would be to have that tender, holy passion made a curse to your existence! Think what it would be banished from those sacred domestic associations and ties which make even this troubled life a paradise to so many. To receive no caress from an affectionate wife—to hear no little child lisp your name as father—to have your holiest emotions pronounced sinful—to have your heart wither before death—to have your face become prematurely aged, and your hair gray before its time. I sometimes doubt, I sometimes feel that there is no certainty before me but the long rest of the grave. Alas, in my gray hairs I now feel as if I were on the brink of despair." Here, overcome by his feelings, he placed his hands over his face, and wept bitterly.

We got to my lodgings at last. I prevailed on him to take my bed, and I determined that he should not be left alone. I managed to rest comfortably enough on a sofa in the same room. He slept very little during the night. At intervals he would mutter something about the Jesuits, and once or twice he started up as if afraid that they had surrounded his bed. I lay awake as long as I could, and tried to re-assure him. Towards day-dawn I fancied he was in a kind of slumber, and I must have been overcome by a heavy sleep, for it was after ten in the forenoon before I awoke. My first impulse was to look

towards the bed. I sprang up at once, for I was alone in the room, and the priest was gone.

I hurriedly dressed, and, in a state of the greatest anxiety, I made inquiries for Father Ambrose. As nearly as I could make out no one had seen him leave the house. What was I to do? I reproached myself for having fallen asleep, and thereby given him an opportunity to escape. I must now go and search for him, if it took me a week. Forgetful at the time of nearly everything else, I went on my way, hardly knowing which course it was best to take, when at the first street corner I met Mr. Casey coming towards me. I had agreed to call on him not later than ten o'clock, and now it was long past eleven. He had become uneasy at my delay, and as I had given him my address, he knew where to find me, and here having met him I considered it a most fortunate circumstance.

Without giving him time to say half-a-dozen words, I told him hastily all concerning the priest, and fully agreeing with me that there should be no time lost in commencing a search, we started together, first to inform Jane lest she should be uneasy by, perhaps, our continued absence for hours.

I did not accompany Mr. Casey as far as his hotel, I was too anxious about the priest. I stood on a certain place where we had agreed to meet, looking in every direction for him I was in search of. Among the many clergy who passed along I could notice those in the peculiar dress of the Jesuits, and when I saw one of these, I turned my eyes at once down some other street, believing that Father Ambrose would shun them if possible, and go another way to avoid meeting any of that dreaded fraternity.

As soon as Mr. Casey joined me again we proceeded slowly through several streets, carefully looking out for a priest with gray hair; but though we saw a few of these, yet so far we

failed to get a sight of the face of him we were seeking. We had been out for more than three hours. I got disheartened, and was beginning to think that our chance of success was very doubtful. We were by this time in that part of the city called the Ghetto or Jews' Quarter. Looking down one of the narrow dirty streets we saw, only a short distance in advance of us, a number of persons watching the strange actions of a priest, and listening to his words, which they evidently did not understand. "There he is," cried I, and running off at once, I clutched Father Ambrose by the arm, to the surprise of those who were near by, and held him as resolutely as if I had been a policeman.

"Why did you leave me?" I asked him in rather an excited manner. But he scarcely turned his face to make a reply. He stood outside of a little shop window, and was intently gazing through the dull besmeared glass at some object inside which seemed to rivet his whole attention.

"There she is! there she is!" cried he, pointing to something inside. "God has sent her to me at last. Look at the heavenly face of my lost Mary!" He repeated these words without paying the least attention to what I said to him.

The little establishment was apparently a kind of pawn-broker's shop, or a place where trifling second-hand articles, prized mostly by the lower class of the population, could be bought, sold, or exchanged. Through the dim glass we could see daggers, pistols, knives, pipes, heads and images of little saints in alabaster; pictures of saints and angels, of the Pope, and the Madonna; diminutive altars; crosses, crucifixes, and praying beads of glass, horn, and brass, all laid here and there without order or arrangement. Through this dull window the priest was gazing at something, and seemed disinclined to turn his eyes aside for a moment. Anxious to discover what it was that had so fixed his gaze, I looked and saw a common un-

framed wood-print of the Virgin and Child close to a central pane, and a little below this hung a small portrait—this was the attractive object—I looked closer, and there, to my amazement, hung the lost portrait of my Aunt Mary.

I saw at once how everything was. In his restless wandering he had chanced to pass this shop, and probably being attracted, just as a child might be by the miscellaneous collection within—or could it be a weapon that he had coveted—he had stopped for a moment, looking perhaps in a listless way at the display, when his eye caught the old treasured portrait, and there he would most probably have remained muttering incoherencies to his Mary, until he might possibly have been forced away as a lunatic, were it not that we had most fortunately discovered him.

I now made no delay. I told Mr. Casey to remain close to the priest. I went into the shop, and pointing to the portrait, signified as well as I could my desire to become its purchaser—for I thought it would be a useless attempt for me to lay claim to its ownership. The man I had to deal with was, so far as I could judge, a Jew. He held up three fingers, meaning that the price would be three *scudi di argento*. I paid him the money forthwith. He had, no doubt, got the portrait for maybe less than half that sum; but I was well satisfied. It was less, I suppose, than one-fourth of its original cost, and had he demanded three times the amount which I paid him, I would have cheerfully given it. When I got outside again, the priest came towards me holding out both hands, so eager was he for its possession. I gave it to him at once. He kissed it repeatedly, pressed it to his heart, and while his eyes were filled with big tears, he quietly allowed us to lead him away.

We got back to my lodgings at last. By this time Father Ambrose was calm again. He evidently knew Mr. Casey, but,

while the tears once more coursed down his cheeks, he expressed himself to me in the most grateful manner : " You have saved me John, you have restored all that most reminds me of her, and now I shall abide my time and die with some content—O, child, how fortunate that you ever found me, for ere this I should have been in the dark river, beyond the reach of that heartless fraternity." While saying this his lip quivered and his trembling hand pointed to the convent of the Jesuits, which could just be seen past the Strada del Gesù. Still looking at the portrait, he said : " This dear image of one that was more to me than life shall now remain with me forever. Before I left Ireland I handed it to your poor mother—Mary's sister—as a sacred trust until my return. I came here, nearly distracted, in the vain hope of seeking a dispensation—a total release from my priestly vows—but with the Church it is, once a priest forever a priest ; I shall, however, seek this no longer. I feel that I shall not have long to wait for my liberty and—for that meeting in Heaven."

Seeing that he was in a very weak condition, we prevailed on him to take a little nourishment and then to try and get a few hours' repose. He agreed to do so. He said he had, to some extent, got over his great despondency, and, regretting that he had given us so much trouble, he assured us that we might rely on him to remain where he was, that he would prefer staying with me at present than going anywhere else, and that if we desired it we might both leave him for a few hours, certain to find him on our return. Still somewhat in doubt, I left directions to have him strictly watched, and having received every assurance that this would be done, I accompanied Mr. Casey to his hotel.

Jane had been awaiting us with some uneasiness. She had heard something of the history of the afflicted priest, and her sympathizing nature had been touched by his long years of

suffering. She was rejoiced to hear that I had perhaps been the means of saving a poor persecuted man from self-destruction, and I saw by her looks how much her gentle nature was touched by the efforts I had made in his behalf.

It was now well towards evening, and, to my eyes, Jane looked perfectly beautiful in her womanhood. Some might say that her face was not decidedly handsome; but for me it was that of an angel. It had an expression without which the most exquisite features would have been commonplace. Anyway, in her appearance, in her simple manner of dressing, in her tenderness, and in her truthfulness, she was to my yearning soul beyond all others, the most attractive of her sex; and as for her constancy I had not now the most lingering doubt. The only trouble that still remained—the only shadow over my happiness—was, why she should persist in remaining solely attached to her father, and have decided to live an unmarried life.

As Mr. Casey was rather fatigued after his unusual long walk with me in our search for Father Ambrose, he now sat dozing in an arm-chair, and as the soft evening air was most inviting, I proposed that Jane and I should sit outside on an adjoining balcony which commanded a fine view of much of the great Roman capital. With what feelings of delicious pleasure I found myself once more alone in her society, and from what I could notice in her manner, I ventured to presume our emotions on this occasion were, to some extent, reciprocal. We were alone.

At any other time, and with any other person, I might have opened a conversation about Romulus and Remus, about the classic ruins around us, and compared the ancient glories of the once Imperial city with its present degenerate condition. But I could not speak of these, another subject was pressing itself on

my attention ; yet with this long-wished-for opportunity now presented I felt singularly embarrassed and could hardly say a word.

"Jane," said I at last, "I must call you by your own name. My heart is full when I think of the long-ago, and I wish I could speak to you with freedom as of old. But I sometimes fear that your sentiments towards me may have changed."

Without any start of affected surprise, she turned her sweet face towards me, and replied, "Why not speak, John? My regard for old friends such as you seldom vary. I should still like to hold a high place in your esteem."

"Oh, of course you do—why should you not? And I am so glad you have called me John again. But you know how long we have been separated, and you know you may have seen some other person whom you would now prefer to the little sickly John of your younger days. I have heard something like this, and I was almost afraid to speak to you again of the past."

She looked calmly at me for a moment or two and quietly said, "Then, John, let me tell you in all sincerity, that if you ever heard that I preferred any other person's friendship or regard—or, I shall say any other person's society—to yours, you have been greatly misinformed."

"I am exceedingly happy to hear you say this," said I with some emotion, "for oh, how sorry I should be to think that the past with us was to be but as a dream."

"I should be sorry also," she replied in a low voice.

"And," continued I, "do you remember our youthful engagement long ago, when we promised to become man and wife? You may now think we were very foolish."

"I have never forgotten it," she answered in the same low voice. "We may have been imprudent."

"Now, Jane, let me ask you—Would you consider such a promise yet binding?"

In a lower voice still she replied, "It shall be just what you wish to consider it."

"Dear Jane," said I, taking her hand, "do tell me one thing. Why have you told your father so often that you would never marry, that you would prefer going into a convent. He has repeatedly assured me that you would not wed the finest man on earth, were he even prince or king—can this be true? Is your heart so closed forever?"

She sat still, let her hands fall, and looked silently into my eyes, and when I repeated the question in a subdued voice, I saw her breast heave, I heard her sob, and then she laid her head on my shoulder and wept.

Tears were now in my own eyes, but after a few moments' pause, I followed up my questions. "Have you any inclination to become a nun, to become one of the 'buried alive' from me, and from all the humanizing and gentle domestic duties and relations belonging to your sex?"

I could just hear her say, "Not if you desire otherwise."

"Have you any wish to remain single, and to waste your affections on winged angels, and withered saints?"

"No," replied she, slowly whispering into my ear, "no, John, not if you will be my guardian angel."

My heart was full. I seized her in my arms and kissed her, and promised and vowed, and almost swore, that I should be to her all that she wished me to be until life should end. Of course we said much more as lovers which it is not necessary to relate, and for some happy minutes after this we sat side by side watching the lessening sunlight on the Roman hills, and looking at some glorious cloud, studded, as it were, with beautiful aerial flags and banners, and bearing pearly freight, sailing slowly away into

the far distance, as if sent out on some mission of peace. The buzz of the flitting bee seemed to be of love; and birds with golden wings flew around us in the rosy air. Every sound seemed turned into a murmur of melody; and the glowing heavens looked as if predicting our happy future. Then when some monastery bell rang out in the clear sky, it seemed as if a celestial voice were proclaiming to all our union of hearts, our pledge of constancy and love; and that no earthly power, secular or clerical, should have power to estrange our affections, or separate us for ever more.





CHAPTER XL.

HIS LAST RITE.

“**H**ERE he is at last,” said Mr. Casey calling to his daughter. “Our friend Valetti has just arrived.”

Jane left my side at once and entered the room; I followed.

“John, this is our friend Monsieur Valetti. Monsieur, our very old friend Mr. Fairband.”

I made a formal bow to my new acquaintance, and we both muttered some common-place compliment. Jane, I could perceive, was not very demonstrative, but she received her father’s friend with every show of respect.

“Only reached the city this afternoon,” said Mr. Casey, repeating the words of his friend. “You ought to have been here yesterday. You know the pontifical blessing is worth a journey of a thousand miles, and many I suppose came farther than that to see his Holiness.”

“Oh I should much wish to have been here yesterday, but I was keep—detained—in le grand city of Paris too long. Mais—but—I should be irreverence enough to preefer coming more for de society of your lovely daughter an yourself den even for de pope—ha—ha.”

“Bravo!” cried Mr. Casey, “That is true French gallantry all out. But, after all, as a good Catholic you would of course choose to kneel to His Holiness before you would to the fairest lady in Christendom.”

I did not hear Valetti's reply, for the sound of his voice had engaged all my attention. I had surely heard that voice before.

The light through the thickly-curtained windows was too dim to enable me to see his features distinctly, but I could notice that he glanced furtively at me several times, and I fancied that he was dissatisfied at my presence. I sat listening to his colloquy with Mr. Casey for a short time longer, and then, making some excuse, I withdrew from the room and went down stairs, all the time trying to discover why Valetti should be associated in my mind with any other person, place, or thing.

While pacing up and down the large lower hall of the hotel, I saw two persons enter. Their appearance struck me at once. They addressed one of the attendants in Italian, and during the time they were speaking, I grew, for some reason, suspicious, and watched them closely. Just then one of the large lamps was lit up, and, behold! there was the stout man and one of the other persons I had seen with him the previous day leaving the albergo. They now sat together on one of the large forms, following with their eyes those who passed along the street, and commenced to smoke cigars. They conversed in an undertone, and in less than ten minutes, to my further surprise, they were joined by Valetti, who had, I presume, shortened his visit and just taken leave of his friends up stairs. He did not notice me, for I stood some distance away. He appeared to be earnestly conversing in the same low tone with the other two, and when he turned his face to the full light he must have seen me; but what was my amazement when I recognized in Valetti, the young priest with whom I had travelled to Paris; one of the three whom I had seen leave the albergo; and, actually, the serenader who had charmed me with his fine singing just before I chanced to fall in with Father Ambrose.

What a discovery! Here it was evident that he was at least

one of the three unscrupulous adventurers—if a worse name for them would not be more applicable—who evidently lived by imposing on strangers and travellers, and assuming different characters to deceive and plunder the unwary. That my friend Mr. Casey had not been already despoiled was in my opinion owing to some deeper plot which had been laid, and which they had hoped that time and perseverance would have made successful. How fortunate that I was in a position to satisfy Mr. Casey as to the real character of the man who had been, no doubt, for a long time watching his movements, and paying such apparently disinterested attention to him and his daughter, in full expectation that he should at last be the accepted suitor of Miss Casey. He had, by certain means known to professional impostors, obtained information as to the position and circumstances of my friend, and having alleged that he was the son of a merchant, with whom the late firm of Fairband and Casey had dealt, succeeded by this story, and by a respectful demeanor, together with other artful means, in imposing on Jane's father who was not naturally suspicious. He had been followed from place to place by these men who had watched him closely, and, from what I had overheard in the albergo, they must have expected to be able to accomplish all they desired.

I returned up stairs at once. I had not been absent more than about twenty-five minutes. I inquired why Valetti had left so soon. Mr. Casey informed me that his friend had merely called according to promise to pay his respects, but that a matter of business would oblige him to postpone his longer stay until the next evening. "The fact is," said Mr. Casey, "Valetti only arrived in Rome this afternoon, and he met unexpectedly two friends who had been at Naples. On their way from that city it seems they were unfortunately robbed of all

the money in their possession, and, in his good nature, wishing to relieve them from their unpleasant difficulty—they being persons of distinction—offered at once to place a sufficient sum at their disposal so as to enable them to continue their tour without the inconvenience of having to delay for a remittance. Singularly however Monsieur Valetti did not happen to have a sufficient amount on hand—a cheque on his banker at Paris would probably delay them too long—and as a favor he merely wished me to loan him, only for a day or two, say a thousand scudi—a less sum might answer, but as they were men of affluence, he did not like to ask them to accept it.”

“You have not given the money?” cried I almost in alarm.

“No,” replied Mr. Casey, not noticing my excitement, “for the very same reason that he offered himself. I have not that much money here with me—well on towards two hundred pounds you know—but I told him I should also have to send to Paris; yet to save delay I thought I should be able to obtain it from you and send it to him in the morning.”

“The scoundrel shall never have a shilling from me, nor from you either,” I exclaimed to the great surprise of both Mr. Casey and Jane. “I have said so,” said I, looking at both with the most determined expression of countenance. “The villain shall not get any money from me, or from you, or from any one else, if I can prevent it. He and his two friends from Naples should be arrested and sent to a treadmill for years.”

“Upon my word,” said Mr. Casey, “you really surprise me!”

“No doubt I do, but it would not be a very pleasant surprise, had you given that man the loan he asked, to find that he was a swindler.”

Jane now appeared to be as much astonished as her father, and, to satisfy them, I related all I knew, and all I had discovered of the so-called Valetti and his companions, and, fur-

thermore, of what I believed was his intention respecting her, and, when I had finished my strange story, both Jane and her father found some difficulty in believing that they had been deceived to such an extent.

"If you are certain that you saw him yesterday," continued Mr. Casey, "why, I have no more to say; but are you positively sure?"

"I am not only certain that I saw him then, but I believe now that he came to the city the very day you came yourself; that he has watched you, or has had some one else to do so ever since—for I remembered having seen two of them looking up at the hotel windows—and I would not be surprised if he was the very thief who stole my handkerchief."

Here both Mr. Casey and Jane could not keep from laughing, the idea seemed so ridiculous; and they remarked that never before had they seen me so excited.

"Well, I admit I feel rather indignant, but of this you may be assured, that had that man not seen me in your company on the Corso the other night, and here this evening again, he would not have asked money from you; he would have pursued his old course; he would have accompanied you to Florence, and his worthy friends would have followed. My being here has changed the aspect of affairs. I saw that he looked upon me with suspicion, and it is my strong impression that you have seen the last of Valetti."

"But won't he come for the money?" asked Mr. Casey. "I promised to try and have it for him to-morrow."

"Oh, no," I replied, "you won't catch him stepping into a trap. As a last chance he may send for the money which he scarcely expects to receive, but he will take good care not to make his application in person."

We discussed this singular matter for some time longer.

Mr. Casey was now perfectly convinced that a deep design had been formed to do him a great injury, and he and Jane agreed with me, that the sooner we quietly left the Roman capital the better, and that if we could only induce Father Ambrose to accompany us back to Ireland, we should take our departure as soon as he was able to travel.

. The priest was asleep when I got back to my lodgings that night. I was glad of this, for rest would now do more for him than medicine. I looked at his pale, care-worn face for some time, and all that I had heard of his pitiful history came back to my remembrance. If it affected me almost to tears, how much more must his own thoughts of the dreadful past have worn down a once vigorous frame, and broken a spirit once animated by the most delightful pictures of the future? Would that his melancholy case were but a solitary instance of the cruelties perpetrated in the name of religion! There he lay—a poor, faded, old man—suffering from the effects of that most terrible of all bereavements, the extinction of hope. What a sad life his must have been! I could fancy him, as an ardent young man, going to meet her on whom his early affections had been placed, and walking hand in hand with the innocent and confiding Mary Kittson, along the green banks of some clear, winding stream, in the quiet evening time. I could hear their pledge of love, their promise to wed, and listen to them speak of their pleasant anticipations of the future. I could see them as they stood side by side, many a fine, clear night—like Jane and me—looking up at the bright stars and thinking of heaven.

Ah me! What was the next scene? Clouds and gloom—the shadow of Loyola across their pathway. Father Gabriel, the Jesuit, arrives, with his dark dress, his piercing eye, and his profound learning—knowledge which but sharpened the weapon he uses against humanity. His treason to nature is whispered

in cunning words to Mary's mother, and his pious, flattering deceptions are made most agreeable to her father. And here enters Don José, the rich, dark-featured gallant, affecting to be fascinated with Mary's beauty, preying upon her blushes, and hinting remote suspicions as to Henry's fidelity. There are vipers on the hearth which lie hiding in ashes of piety. Next, the two Jesuits in council plotting the eternal separation of Henry and Mary, and reading their intercepted letters. Next Mary's reluctant abandonment of the world to become a nun, followed by the pitiful scene which ended the ceremony of her "taking the veil," and, lastly, a few months later, came the saddest scene of all, when Henry could be seen weeping over her while she lay confined in the cathedral, and surrounded by a glare of lights. Shocking! All this done ostensibly for so-called religious purposes—this painful tragedy brought about to serve the interests of the Church.

These scenes passed before me while I still watched the hapless victim of ecclesiastical iniquity ; and then remembering what he had once lately said in reference to an overruling Providence, I almost shared his doubts that an omnipotent Power could remain passive and permit such infamous designs to become successful. The more I dwelt upon this, and the more I urged Reason to account for the seeming indifference of an Almighty Being to the prevention of cruelty and injustice, the more I became perplexed. Ponder on this as I would, Reason could, however, give no satisfactory reply, and my only resource was to accept the usual orthodox explanation—that it was one of the sacred mysteries which were beyond our limited comprehension.

I awoke early next morning. I was anxious to acquaint Father Ambrose of our plan, and to request him to accompany us to Ireland. I saw to my regret that he appeared much weaker,

but he assured me with a smile that nothing now would afford him greater pleasure than to return to his native land whenever we were ready to go. "I have not much longer to remain here," said he, taking my hand, "I should like to stand by your grave once more, and to have a place by her side when I depart."

"Oh," said I, trying to cheer him, "you will, I hope, have some happy years yet; I want you to stay with me always. We shall go back to the old house and you will get better."

To this he slowly shook his head, and then closed his eyes. "Father Ambrose," whispered I to him, "Mr. Casey and his daughter are coming to see you to-day. You may have heard of little Jane who used to be with us at Cove. Well, she will be here, and she will nurse you and make you well again."

He thought for a moment. "I remember her, John, and I have an impression that your happiness is some way connected with her. I should like to see her, but no matter what her skill may be, she cannot delay the approach of that which is coming."

Noticing the despondency by which he was affected, I said to him, in a genial way, that Jane might possibly perform a miracle. And in hopes that he might be more enlivened by another influence, I made haste to bring an angel to his side who in some degree be a resemblance to the one he had lost.

It was as I had predicted. Valetti had sent a trusted messenger for the loan which I fancy he now scarcely expected to obtain, but he kept away himself. A certain formal receipt instead of the money—was however returned, which was intended to relieve Mr. Casey from any further importunities and from another visit from his polite Parisian friend. I made sure that he should have no more annoyance from that source, it was decided that we should leave Rome the next morning.

The spring flowers were in full bloom again when we got back to our old house at Cove. My brother and Shawn were there to meet us. Ah, what recollections! Where was the greeting of the lost ones? The sound of those parental voices was hushed forever. At his own request Father Ambrose desired to occupy the big room, and he had it all to himself. Daily his pulse became feebler, and his face more pale. But he had one ministering angel almost constantly by his side; knowing his sorrows, Jane was ever near him; in fact he became more restless in her absence. Night and day she left nothing undone which it was possible to perform to make his remaining days more easy and peaceful. The priest became wonderfully attached to her, and he often told me that she greatly reminded him of one that was in heaven; and that she must have been mysteriously sent to cheer his remaining days upon earth.

One day after this when I was alone with Father Ambrose, he said to me: "John, I have been talking to Jane's father about you. I have noticed that your happiness is centered in her, and, without you, I find that life would be to her a dreadful blank. I shall not be a Jesuit and advise you to take holy orders, and her to become a nun. O, God forbid! I know that any means you or she may have to spare, will be cheerfully shared among the poor, and otherwise spent in doing good. This will be better than to have it controlled by those who would mostly spend it for the propagation of a creed which—I speak from painful knowledge of facts—is dangerous in many respects, dangerous, dangerous. Would that I had known it sooner!" Here he was almost overcome, and he drew long, heavy inspirations. "Now, John," continued he, "my strongest desire is to see you and Jane united, so that no earthly power can accomplish your separation."

"You have judged my feelings rightly," I replied ; "but her father is under the impression that she desires to enter a convent."

"He does not think that now," continued the priest, "for I have assured him that I had elicited the confession from Jane's own lips that she loved you. This was not a spiritual confession. I shall never hear another of these, nor perform any other priestly ceremony but one, and I have Jane's consent already, as well as her father's, that this shall be done by me ; and now I know that I shall have yours."

"If it will afford you the least happiness, you know you have only to name your request."

"Then," said the priest, taking my hand, "it will be to make you, as I think you will be, deservedly happy. It was there," said he, pointing to the recess, "I said my last mass, my requiem for your poor Aunt Mary's soul ; I have never stood upon an altar since that. It was there I gave you your second baptism—which I now believe was a useless rite—my next ceremony will be one which you will not attend unwillingly ; it is there I wish to unite you in marriage to Jane."

"O, Father Ambrose, how good you are. You have relieved me by mentioning the subject to Mr. Casey. I should on this matter feel strangely diffident with him myself. Most gladly do I accept your kind offer, for when Jane and I kneel before you, I have every expectation that connubial happiness will follow your last blessing."

Nothing more was said on this subject for nearly a week. Mr. Casey remained with us, and he repeatedly expressed his gratification with our matrimonial arrangements. Shawn, apparently but little more aged than when I first left home, was still the faithful servant we had ever found him. Nelly Carberry—now a widow—we had got back again ; she was yet the same affectionate creature. Business required that my brother

should spend the most of his time in the city, but early one morning Father Ambrose told me to send for him. The priest had scarcely left his bed for the last two or three days, and despite of all attention was evidently sinking.

"I had a dream last night," said he in a low voice to Jane and me, "a beautiful dream. I saw them—your mother and Mary—sitting on a sun-lit hill. They were looking towards the west, while a clear river, which lay between us, could be seen winding away in the distance. The sun seemed to be setting, and with the red light, like a glory around them, they beckoned me to come across. I heard them say that they should await me, as I had but few hours more to remain on earth. This dream has left an unusual impression on my mind. I feel that I have not long to stay here. I have that last ceremony to perform—it must be done to-morrow, and then I shall be ready to test the reality of the promised future."

It was a beautiful afternoon in May. Scarcely a leaf was stirring, and the clear air was vocal with the songs of birds. The fragrance of flowers from the garden entered the windows, and a few roses decorated the recess. Father Ambrose, pale and emaciated, and wearing a soutaine and stole for the last time, sat in a cushioned arm-chair within the space where the altar had once been erected. Jane and I stood before him. Mr. Casey and Shawn were at one side, and my brother and Nelly Carberry on the other. I must own to a little nervousness, for the solemn manner of the priest recalled to my mind, even at that distance of time, his melancholy ghost-like appearance that startled me on the day of my baptism. But the ceremony was soon over; he held our hands while giving us a few kind words of admonition, and then having given us his priestly blessing, he told all present that he had performed his last office, and that I and Jane were husband and wife.



CHAPTER XLI.

THE GREAT PREACHERS.

IT is now nearly four years since Father Ambrose ended his earthly career, yet still it seems but yesterday. He lived for several days after our marriage ; but within two hours after the performance of his last ceremony he was taken to his bed, and from thence to his grave. I cannot at present recall all he said during that time, neither can Jane fully remember ; but in his sleep, in his wandering, in his delirium, one beloved name was repeatedly upon his lips, and at times, under the imagination that he was young again, he would plead pitifully with Mary's parents to have her liberated from the nunnery ; he would warn them against the machinations of Father Gabriel, and tell all to beware of the designing, treacherous Jesuits. His last moments were, however, singularly peaceful ; and his last words, as if directed to some waiting angel, were—"Wait ! I am free, I am free ! I shall be a priest no longer." We did not take from his hand the little picture. He had looked at it frequently during his last illness, and his dying gaze faded on the features he held before him. The portrait is now with him in his grave.

Another marriage ceremony since mine has taken place. My brother is the husband of Bertha Reardon, and she is one of the most devoted of wives. We were all pleased with his

choice ; and I think he is supremely happy in her possession. They reside in the city, and as they often visit us at the old home, our family reunions are of the happiest kind.

My sister is still immured in a convent. I regret the choice she has made—she may perhaps regret it now herself. Her life is to some extent a dreary blank ; and her black dress, though intimating a seclusion from the world, does not, after all, hide her from the anxieties which are the common lot of all. One who knows tells me that the pious inmates of a nunnery, from the mother abbess down to the latest novice, have their cares, their strifes, their jealousies, and their envyings. Go where we may, to the desert or to the city, to the crowded thoroughfare or to the solitary glen, while life lasts we are still in the world, and no one can run away from its inevitable trials and afflictions.

The oratory at Bristol is closed, and in the little yard where "Rattry Jim" so often made his appearance, long slender grass is growing under the rotting benches. That which was most useful and humane in connection with my uncle's religious efforts is no longer followed within that enclosure, and the hungry poor who may happen to be near must pass without an invitation to enter, and get a mouthful of bread. The aged and unfortunate who once trod that place, who have not sunk in despair, have turned their feeble steps for aid in some other direction, and will never return to sit and wait in patience for their scanty allowance.

St. Philip's is deserted. It is now a lonely place, its doors are closely fastened, locks and bolts are rusting, dust has gathered on its windows, and smoke is never seen ascending from its tall chimneys. Its apartments are desolate, and cobwebs hang in its gloomy hall. No voice is heard within its walls, no echo is awakened ; but, unless from occasional street sounds, by day as

well as by night, an oppressive stillness seems to prevail around. What a change! Since the death of the priest and prophet of the oratory, one might think that St. Philip himself had accompanied his ministering servant to the celestial gates and had left his neglected homestead to ruin and decay. Alas, my poor uncle! Even those who ridiculed his religious teaching and practices would admit, that if he was led away by delusions, he was at least thoroughly sincere, and had a kind and generous heart. Perhaps if his were not so susceptible he might be still living. The story concerning him, which came to me from an excellent source, was, that from the time of my departure, he had become, day after day, more and more attached to his housekeeper, Mrs. Reardon. Between divinity and perhaps foolish love his mind was very much disturbed. For a long time Mrs. Reardon could hardly believe that he entertained any more than a feeling of warm friendship for her, but when she had the assurance from his own lips, that she was his idol, and when she felt compelled to refuse the most honorable offer he could make, the poor man's intellect gradually gave way, and before long it was found necessary to place him in an asylum. Depression and melancholy followed, which soon ended his days.

I should speak well of him, knowing his good intentions in all that he did. To me he was, I may say, more than a father; and, as a proof of his affection, he left me the largest share of all he possessed. He bequeathed a considerable sum to Mrs. Reardon; and, aware of his peculiar leanings, what surprised me as much as anything else, was, that instead of giving money for religious or ecclesiastical purposes, he was governed by higher motives, and humanely left the remainder—a handsome amount—to the poor of the parish.

What shall I say of my respected tutor, Mr. O'Callaghan— I shall not omit the "O" on this occasion. He still remained

with my uncle, but on account of one matter—their hearts pulsating after the same object—a feeling of alienation was engendered between them, and this increased so much, that my uncle entertained a serious inclination to dispense with his further services; still he allowed week after week to pass without being able to dismiss one in whom he had for so long a time placed confidence. However, when it came to the knowledge of Mr. O'Callaghan that Mrs. Reardon had declined to become my uncle's wife, he felt strongly impressed that it must have been some way on his account, and, after much painful cogitation on the subject, he formed the desperate determination to make a proposal to her himself. Alas for his foolish hopes! Her answer nearly broke his heart. But, cast down as he was, he summoned resolution enough to leave her dangerous presence, and he is now, I believe, a school-teacher in some remote part of Canada. I have not heard from him yet, but I cannot think that he will altogether forget his pupil—"the cardinal."

As for Mrs. Reardon herself, she is now living with her daughter Bertha, and has lately become a young grandmother. My brother says that no mother-in-law was ever a greater treasure in a family. Mr. Sharp, her old friend, sometimes calls on her. She is always glad to see him, and I fancy, from what he says, that were she to give him the least encouragement in a certain way, she might receive another proposal. But in order to keep him from committing himself, and to relieve her from being under the necessity of giving pain to a particular friend, I have given Mr. Sharp an indirect hint to prevent his further approach. I have told him that I was positively certain, having had it from the best authority, that nothing could induce Mrs. Reardon ever again to change her name.

Shawn—the faithful Shawn!—is still with us. He is, in one

respect, alone in the world. His wife and children are dead, and we are now the only ones upon whom he depends for support when in his helpless age. He knows, however, that he is sure of our protection; our home would, in a manner, be desolate without him. Mr. Casey is very much attached to him, and in the evening time they often stroll away together to a favorite spot where they can look out upon the distant ocean and speculate on the mysteries of eternity. Shawn must have been saying something in his own peculiar way on the subject to Mr. Casey, for I find that his views are in many respects greatly modified. What a revolution in his opinions there might have been, had he had, during his early years, the opportunity of calm discussion even with such an humble philosopher as Shawn.

Jane and I, taking lessons from the past, are happily nearly of one mind on most of the important concerns of life. We encourage no perplexing thoughts as to what may follow upon the close of our existence here. If there is to be a great, glorious hereafter, we think that the best preparation for such a state—that which will best entitle us to future enjoyment—will be to do all the good we can to our fellow-creatures while on earth; and we believe that any great Supreme Power, knowing the weakness of the creatures He has made, will not judge them as man would judge, or, in His dealings with fallible beings, condemn and punish them with a vindictiveness purely human.

There are three graves, side by side, in a rural churchyard which we often visit. Ah me! what it is to look down upon a mother's last resting-place! They are eloquent mounds which solemnize our thoughts and bid us remember, that though now in the pride of life, the time must come when some fond heart may perhaps stand and sigh above the little spot where we ourselves may be laid. And when after a glowing sunset we see again cloud pictures in the sky, they serve to remind us how dreamy

and evanescent in character are even the realities of life ; and they warn us against the bright illusions which deceive so many.

The most profound intellect that ever suggested a thought tells us that there are "sermons in stones." But the preachers who have most touched our hearts are the priests of the Sanctuary of Ended Careers, who proclaim over the dead the vanity of human ambition, and the folly of human strife—the mute petrified monitors who stand up among the silent congregation—the old crumbling tombs and monuments of a cemetery, from which the wind and rain of centuries have rubbed out every holy text, and every flattering inscription, leaving the stone page clear and blank once more. These are the ministers of peace who never contend for the superiority of a creed ; and while looking at them and imagining that they speak words of wisdom to which we can listen, and while pondering on the solemn lessons which they so eloquently convey, we little care what some marble slab may tell of us when we too shall have passed away.

THE END.



